

# ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY

## The Fourth Chum

by John Schoolcraft



*A Promise  
Born on the  
Battlefield*

10¢ PER  
COPY

NOVEMBER 10

BY THE  
YEAR \$4.00





Thanksgiving.





# Can Success Like This Be An Accident?

THE fellows who used to work with me while I was plugging along at \$25 a week are convinced that I either had a 'pull' or just 'fell into a good thing'—that my \$9,000 a year position is a sheer accident.

"When I told them I had found an easy way to earn big money as a salesman, they laughed at me and called it a 'harebrained idea.' They told me 'salesmen are born, not made.' But I decided to see my harebrained idea 'through.' I was sick of slaving for a pittance.

"I started studying the secrets of master salesmanship as taught by the National Salesmen's Training Association—and almost before I knew it I had confidence to tackle my first selling position. And why not? I had mastered the very secrets of selling used by the most successful salesmen.

"My earnings during the past month were \$750. I now have better than a \$9,000 a year position—with lots more room to grow. I can state positively that my sudden success was not an accident. It came because I knew how to sell scientifically. And how simple it is to sell when you know how. My regret is that I did not know these secrets ten years ago."—Ellis Sumner Cook, Manufacturers Agent, 20 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

## Why Not Make More Money?

If you want to get out of the wage-earning class, if you want to make good money without loss of time—then do as Mr. Cook and thousands of others have done.

The secrets of salesmanship which Mr. Cook learned are available to you. There are certain ways to approach prospects, to stimulate interest, to overcome objections, and to close sales. Every move in selling is governed by certain rules. Once you know these success is yours.

## Success Like This Yours

Adam Horneber, Bay City, Mich., writes: "I have increased my earning power 500% since I secured your training in the Science of Selling."

Lewis A. Tinnes, Minneapolis, Minn., writes: "When I finished your training, I left my job at \$160 a month and took a job as salesman. The first month I made over \$600 and I expect to go higher yet."

F. K. Kramer, Pine Bluff, Ark., writes: "Since studying the N. S. T. A. Course I have increased my earning capacity from \$2,200 to over \$6,000 a year."

N. D. Miller, 1705 S. Clark Street, Chicago, says: "I

place the credit for my success where it rightfully belongs. I owe my present position wholly to the N. S. T. A. In July, 1919, I studied your selling secrets and in September you secured me the position which I now hold. I am earning in excess of \$100 a week."

Bear in mind that these stories of real success—the kind that is awaiting you in this field of unlimited money-making opportunities—are but a few of thousands on file. You will find scores of them in our literature.

## Valuable Book Free

No matter what you may now think, it is only a thought. Get the facts! See for yourself how you can easily duplicate any of these stories of success. NOW and no other time is the minute to mail the coupon below. Our big free book, "Modern Salesmanship," will be mailed promptly. And there's no obligation.

## NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION

Dept. 2-S, 53 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

## NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASS'N,

Dept. 2-S, 53 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Illinois

Send me FREE your book, "Modern Salesmanship," and proof that I can become a Master Salesman.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Age.....Occupation.....



# ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOL. CLV

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NUMBER 5

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## OUR NEXT SERIAL

### ANNIHILATION - *By Isabel Ostrander*

A POWERFUL tale, dramatically told, of the struggle of ex-roundsman Timothy McCarty, dogged, courageous, and keen of brain, against a crime avalanche that threatened the city's foremost families. The gates of the New Queen's Mall were high and strong, but dread mystery and death rioted in that exclusive section until—but read it yourself,

**BEGINNING IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY**

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$6.00 to Canada, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1923

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## Drawing Table —FREE!

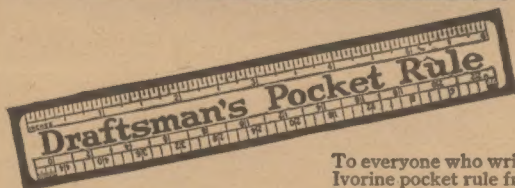
I am giving this practical folding Chief's Own drawing table to each of my students positively without cost. I am making this offer to get men everywhere interested in the great future which a draftsman has. More draftsmen are in demand to-day—right now—than ever before. It has been estimated that there are 6,000 calls for draftsmen every month. So, I want students to enroll early. As I train all students personally in the practical work of the drafting room, I cannot, will not and do not take everybody. I select my students.

Send the free coupon below and find out how and why I give this drafting table without cost to my students.



## Drawing Outfit — FREE

Here is a regular drawing outfit for the draftsman and designer which I am presenting to each of my students who enrolls before this offer is withdrawn. In this outfit is every instrument necessary to the skilled draftsman. All of the drawing instruments are nickel-plated and the rules and all other materials are of the finest quality. I am making this offer because all men who want to become draftsmen, working under fine, clean conditions, and with opportunities for fast advancement, should enroll at this time. They should not wait.



## Pocket Rule FREE!

To everyone who writes now for the offers which I am making, I will send this Ivory pocket rule free. All you need to tell me is your age and that you are interested in becoming a draftsman. I want you to have this constant reminder of the great future which will be in store for you if you become a draftsman.

# \$90 Drafting Course FREE

In addition to all of my other offers, I have also made arrangements whereby you may get a regular \$90 Drafting course entirely free. I have determined to do all I can in preparing draftsmen for the thousands of calls which are being made for them by offering every inducement possible to ambitious men anxious to succeed in a big way.

**Salaries \$250 and \$300 a Month  
Up To**

I guarantee to train you in my personal, practical work until you are placed in a position earning \$250 to \$300 a month. This is a positive, actual guarantee.

### Get My Book of FREE Offers

Send coupon at once for my book, "Successful Draftsmanship." I will send it prepaid. I will also send you a list of the free offers which I am making to my drafting students now. Send this coupon, postcard or letter, at once.

**Chief Draftsman Engineer's Equipment Co,  
1951 Lawrence Ave. Div. 14-58 Chicago, Ill.**

**Chief Draftsman, Engineers Equipment Co.  
1951 Lawrence Ave., Div. 14-58 Chicago, Ill.**

Without any obligation, whatever, please mail your book, "Successful Draftsmanship", and full particulars of your liberal "Personal Instruction" offer to few students.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_





# Classified Advertising

## The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

## Classified Advertising

### Rates in the Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	Combination Line Rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$1.50	\$4.00
Argosy-Allstory	2.50	less 2% cash discount
Weekly		
Minimum space four lines.		

Dec. 15th Argosy-Allstory Forms Close Nov. 17th.

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**AGENTS**—Earn \$30 to \$35 extra every week taking orders for our high class tailoring—during your spare time—made-to-measure suits from \$14.95 to \$39.50. Your own clothes at low wholesale prices. No experience needed. Write for our **BIG FREE SAMPLE** outfit. **THE PROGRESS TAILORING CO.**, Dept. Y-104, Chicago, Ill.

**AGENTS**: Make \$7 to \$14 a day. Brand new Cutlery Set. You take orders, we deliver and collect. Pay you daily. No experience necessary. We need Sales Agents, men or women, to work full or spare time. Write quick. **JENNINGS MFG. CO.**, Dept. 1809, Dayton, Ohio.

**PORTRAIT, MEDALLION AND PHOTO JEWELRY AGENTS**—our goods will make you big profits; delivery guaranteed; prompt shipments; low prices; send for latest catalog. **Adam J. Kroll & Co.**, 600 Blue Island Ave., Chicago.

**WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR.** Soaps, Extracts, Perfumes, Toilet Goods. Experience unnecessary. **CARNATION CO.**, Dept. 200, St. Louis, Mo.

**YOU CAN SELL WALL EMBLEMS AND EMBLEM GOODS.** Quickest, Easiest, Profitable. Xmas and year round sellers. Write for free sample—bonus plan. **KIER FRATERNAL EMBLEM**, 450 Como Bldg., Chicago.

**MEN'S SHIRTS. EASY TO SELL. BIG DEMAND EVERYWHERE.** Make \$15.00 daily. Undersell stores. Complete line. Exclusive patterns. Free Samples. **CHICAGO SHIRT MANUFACTURERS**, 241 W. Van Buren St., Factory 145, Chicago.

**HERE'S A BUSINESS**—Requires only table room. We start and help build business. Work for us painting Landscape photo print pictures. No experience, outfit furnished. Free literature. **TANGLEY COMPANY**, 193 Main, Muscatine, Iowa.

**RUMMAGE SALES MAKE \$50.00 DAILY.** We start you. Representatives wanted everywhere. **WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTORS**, Dept. 26, 609 Division Street, Chicago.

**AGENTS—MAKE A DOLLAR AN HOUR.** Sell Mendets, a patent patch for instantly mending leaks in all utensils. Sample package free. **Collette Manufacturing Company**, Dept. 306-B, Amsterdam, N. Y.

**\$50,000 PICTURE MAN FRIEDMAN MADE TAKING ORDERS.** Beginners can make \$100.00 weekly with my canvassing spiel, experienced men make more. Free circular "Profits in Portraits" explains. Samples free. **PICTURE MAN FRIEDMAN**, Dept. A. 673 Madison, Chicago.

**GET OUR FREE SAMPLE CASE**—Toilet articles, perfumes and specialties. Wonderfully profitable. **LA DERMA CO.**, Dept. D, St. Louis, Mo.

**MAKE \$17 DAILY**—Finest Extracts, Food Products, Toilet Preparations, Household Necessities. Credit; Sample case Free. Write for amazing offer. **PERKINS PRODUCTS**, B-23, Hastings, Nebr.

## AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

**FREE TO WRITERS**—a wonderful little book of money making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy now! Just address **Authors' Press**, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

**STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., ARE WANTED** for publication. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss., or write **LITERARY BUREAU**, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

## MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

**PHOTOPLAYS WANTED BY 48 Companies**; \$10 to \$500 Each paid for suitable ideas. No experience needed; details sent free to beginners. Sell your ideas. **PRODUCERS LEAGUE**, 388 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

## MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FORSALE

**GOOD FARM LANDS!** Near hustling city in lower Mich.; 20, 40, 80 ac. tracts; only \$10 to \$50 down; bal. long time. Write today for free illustrated booklet. **SWIGART LAND CO.**, Y-1245 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**TAILORING SALESMEN**; Snappiest "Direct to Wearer" Line on Earth "Virgin Wool" custom tailored suits and overcoats \$28.00. Big advance commissions. Representatives furnished a high grade tailoring shop in one elaborate case. **HOUSE OF CAMPBELL**, State at Congress St., Chicago.

**WE START YOU IN BUSINESS**, furnishing everything. Men and women, \$30.00 to \$100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. **W. Hillyer Bagsdale**, Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.

**LARGE CORPORATION WANTS A Service Man** in every town to paste up its signs on store-keepers windows. Excellent opportunity for reliable party. Steady work. No experience necessary. We also have attractive proposition for agents and salesmen. **GUARANTEE SIGN SERVICE**, 365 W. Superior St., Chicago.

**AGENTS—OUR SOAP AND TOILET ARTICLE PLAN IS A WONDER.** GET OUR FREE SAMPLE CASE OFFER. **HO-BO-CO**, 118 LOCUST, ST. LOUIS, MO.

**Agents: C. T. A.** prices lower than ever. Suits \$18.00 made to order, any size or style. Orders easy to get. Big profits. Agents outfit free. Sample suit at cost. Write **CHICAGO TAILORS ASS'N**, Dept. 447, Sta. C, Chicago.

**AGENTS.** Make \$10 to \$20 daily, selling small kitchen necessity. Over 200% profit. Sells rapidly everywhere to nine out of ten women. New plan make sales easy. **PREMIER MFG. COMPANY**, Dept. 811, Detroit, Mich.

**WONDERFUL INVENTION**—Eliminates all needles for phonographs. Saves time and annoyance. Preserves records. Lasts for years. 12,000,000 prospects. \$15.00 daily. Free sample to workers. **EVERPLAY**, Desk 1112, McClurg Bldg., Chicago.

**WANTED.** Soap agents to sell our 150 products. No money required. Write **LINRO COMPANY**, Dept. 225, St. Louis, Mo.

**AGENTS: \$75.00—\$100.00 WEEKLY** taking orders for popular price-smashing raincoats, \$3.98. Largest commission advanced. Prompt shipment. We collect. Free coats, Eagle Raincoat Co., 593 Mid City Bank Building, Chicago.

## EDUCATIONAL

**YOU** read these little advertisements. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read your message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

## PATENT ATTORNEYS

**PATENTS.** If you have an invention write for our Guide Book, "How To Get A Patent." Send model or sketch and description, and we will give our opinion as to its patentable nature. **Randolph & Co.**, 630 F. Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS.** Write for **FREE** Guide Books. List of Patent Buyers and Record of Invention Blank. Send model or sketch and description for our free opinion of its patentable nature. Reasonable terms. **VICTOR J. EVANS & CO.**, 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE.** HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS. PROMPTNESS ASSURED. SEND DRAWING OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND OPINION AS TO PATENTABILITY. **WATSON E. COLEMAN**, 624 F ST., WASHINGTON, D. C.

## SONG POEMS WANTED

**POEMS WANTED**—Sell your song-verses for cash. Submit Mss. at once or write **NEW ERA MUSIC COMPANY**, 123, St. Louis, Mo.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.



## Year to Pay



This is  
Pattern 408



## 3 Rugs Free

Each small rug measures 18 x 36 inches. They match exactly the large rug you select. While this offer lasts, we give three of these small rugs free with each large rug; all for less than the price of one.



### TRIPLE GUARANTEE

There is only one guaranteed Congoleum, identified by the Gold Seal shown above—on the Rugs. It protects you against dissatisfaction and gives you an unconditional money-back guarantee. Behind the Gold Seal Guarantee is our own Double Bond. No orders filled in cities of 100,000 population or over

Choice of two Patterns  
on 30 Days Free Trial

This is  
Pattern 534



Four **CONGOLEUM** Rugs for  
Less than the Price of One

# \$1.00 Brings All Four

Ours is the only house in America that can make such an offer. No one else can bring you a genuine guaranteed Gold Seal Congoleum Rug, in the full 9 foot by 12 foot size, with three small rugs extra, and all for less than the regular price of the big rug alone. And on a year credit. Clip the coupon below. Write your name and address plainly. Say which pattern you want. Pin a dollar bill to it—mail at once. We will ship immediately—on a months trial—all 4 Congoleum Rugs—in one complete neat package. No muss, no bother, no trouble to lay. If satisfactory take a year to pay.

**Tile Pattern No. 408** Probably no floor covering of any quality or price ever piled up the popularity of this wonderful design. It is a superb tile pattern that looks like mosaic. Lovely robin's egg blue, with shadings of Dutch blue, and a background of soft stone gray, give a matchless effect. Particularly suited for kitchen or dining room. Don't fear muddy boots and shoes. A damp mop whisks it clean in a jiffy.

**Only \$1.00 with Coupon—\$1.50 Monthly**  
**No. E4C408** 9x12ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Rug with three \$17.95 small rugs to match, each 18x36 in.—all four only

**Pattern No. 534** This is the Oriental Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rug as shown at the top of this page. On the floor, it looks unbelievably like an expensive woven rug. The richest blue color dominates the ground work. Mellow ecru, old ivories and light tans, set off the blue field. Mingled with these lovely tints are peacock blue, robin's egg blue and darker tones. Old rose, tiny specks of lighter pink and dark mulberry are artistically placed. Darker browns and blacks lend dignity and richness.

The border background contrasts with the blue all over center by reversing the color scheme. Ecru and tan shades form the border background. An ideal all purpose rug, beautiful in any room.

**Only \$1.00 with Coupon—\$1.50 Monthly**  
**No. E4C534** 9x12ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Rug with three \$17.95 small rugs to match, each 18x36 in.—all four only

Our Catalog of 10000 Other Furniture Bargains—  
Now Ready. A Postal Card Brings it FREE!

**Spiegel, May, Stern & Co.**

1082 W. 35th Street, CHICAGO, ILL.

Ask for  
FREE  
Catalog

### The Rug of Guaranteed Wear

Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs are the most popular floor covering known. They are rapidly becoming the national floor covering—highly prized in good homes for any and all rooms.

**Waterproof.** No burlap for water to rot. Surface is hard, smooth and wear-resisting. Does not stain. Dirt cannot accumulate underneath.

**They lie flat** from the first moment without fastening. They never curl up or kick up at edges or corners. No need to tack or fasten them down. Dirt cannot accumulate underneath.

**Less work.** Rid yourself of back-breaking drudgery. Dirt, ashes, grit, dust or mud cannot "grind into" Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs. A damp rag or mop keeps it clean and colorings bright.

No laborious beating, no sending to cleaners. Absolutely sanitary.

### PIN A DOLLAR TO COUPON BELOW

Spiegel, May Stern Co., 1082 W. 35th St., Chicago, Ill.

I enclose \$1 for the 4 Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rugs—exactly as described—in the pattern selected below, on 30 days free trial. If I return them, you are to refund my \$1, also all transportation costs. Otherwise I will pay \$1.50 monthly until special bargain price of \$17.95 is paid.

I want Pattern Number

Be sure to write in space above the Number of the pattern you select. If you wish both patterns, put down both numbers send \$2 with order and \$3 monthly and get all 8 rugs.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street, R.F.D. \_\_\_\_\_  
or Box No. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping Point \_\_\_\_\_

Also send me your latest Free Furniture Book



# DIAMONDS and other Xmas Gifts

**Send No Money On Credit**  
**10 Days' Free Trial**

**\$5** down—\$2 a month for any of these three rings



**X30**—Perfect cut blue white diamond. 18k. white gold set with perfect cut and pierced ring..... **\$25.00**

**X48**—Handsome richly carved 18k. white gold onyx ring set with perfect cut blue white diamond..... **\$25.00**

**X32**—Solid 18k. white gold ring set with perfect cut blue white diamond..... **\$22.50**

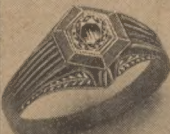
**\$10** down—\$1 a week for any of these six rings



**X84**—18k. white gold perfect cut blue white quality diamond..... **\$50.00**

**X76**—18k. white gold two perfect cut blue white diamonds one square sapphire **\$42.50**

**X38**—Seven blue white diamonds set in PLATINUM. Green gold 14k. ring..... **\$52.50**



**X92**—Man's 14k. green gold ring 18k. white gold top. Perfect cut blue white diamond. **\$57.50**



**X86**—Two blue white perfect cut diamonds one sapphire 18k. white gold ring..... **\$50.00**



**X94**—Artistic 18k. white gold ring. Perfect cut blue white diamond. Rare beauty..... **\$48.50**

**\$15** down—\$1.50 a week for any of these three rings



**X20**—7 white diamonds. PLATINUM set 18k. white gold ring..... **\$77.50**

**X90**—Engagement ring. 14k. yellow gold. Perfect cut blue white diamond **\$75.00**

**X44**—18k. white gold ring. Perfect cut blue white diamond. **\$73.50**



**X98**—Solid 14k. white gold case. Sapphire crown. Fancy dial. Adjusted 15 jewel movement. Guaranteed time-piece. Very dainty. **\$25** . . \$5 down—\$2 a month.

**Send No Money**

**FREE** your money back immediately. You take no risk. Transactions confidential. Guarantee Bond with each purchase.

Write for Xmas Catalog. Latest designs in quality jewelry at lowest prices and most liberal credit terms. Diamonds, watches, jewelry ivory toilet sets, etc. Prices \$10 to \$1000. Large and choice variety. Our prompt and efficient service has earned us thousands of satisfied customers. If you do not see what you want here, do not order your Xmas Gifts until you send for our catalog. Established 1890 Write Dept. C-27

**BAER BROS. Co.**  
6 MAIDEN LANE - NEW YORK

# EARN MONEY AT HOME

YOU can make \$15 to \$60 weekly in your spare time writing show cards. No canvassing or soliciting. We instruct you by our new simple Directograph system, pay you cash each week and guarantee you steady work. Write for full particulars and free booklet.

**WEST-ANGUS SHOW CARD SERVICE, LIMITED**

Authorized Capital \$1,250,000.00

72 Colborne Building

Toronto, Can.

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

## HELP WANTED

**ESTABLISH YOURSELF—AT HOME—AS A Photographic Expert.** Make \$75 a week while learning. Write at once for TEMPORARY offer. **INTERNATIONAL STUDIOS, Dept. 2367, 3601 Michigan Ave., Chicago.**

**BE A DETECTIVE—Earn Big Money.** Great demand everywhere. Travel. Fascinating work. Make secret investigations. Experience unnecessary. Write, **GEORGE A. WAGNER, former Government Detective, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.**

**MEN—AGE 17 TO 45. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY.** Travel; make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 320, St. Louis, Mo.

**RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS, STENOGRAPHERS, CLERKS, TYPISTS** wanted by Government. Examinations weekly. Prepare at home. Write for free list and plan 301, payment after securing position. **C. J. O., 1710 Market St., Philadelphia.**

**SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME. YOU CAN EARN FIFTEEN TO FIFTY DOLLARS WEEKLY** writing showcards at home. No canvassing. Pleasant, profitable profession, easily, quickly learned by our simple graphic block system. Artistic ability unnecessary. We instruct you and supply work. **WILSON METHODS, LTD., Dept. 50-1, Toronto, Canada.**

**EARN \$1 AN HOUR AT HOME WRITING SHOWCARDS FOR US.** We instruct and provide work. **KWIK SHOWCARD SYSTEM, Dept. A, Bond Street, Toronto, Canada.**

**WANTED—MEN 18 UP.** Commence \$133 month. Steady. Railway Mail Clerks. Travel—see country. Schedule examination places—free. Write immediately. **FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. D-1, Rochester, N. Y.**

## HELP WANTED—MALE

**EARN \$110 TO \$250 MONTHLY,** expenses paid as Railway Traffic Inspector. Position guaranteed after completion of 3 months' home study course or money refunded. Excellent opportunities. Write for Free Booklet CM-30. Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

**FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN, SLEEPING CAR, TRAIN PORTERS** (colored). \$140—\$200. Experience unnecessary. 836 RAILWAY BUREAU, E. St. Louis, Ill.

## HELP WANTED—FEMALE

**EARN MONEY AT HOME** during spare time painting lamp shades, pillow tops for us. No canvassing. Easy and interesting work. Experience unnecessary. **NILEART COMPANY, 2235, Ft. Wayne, Indiana.**

**WANTED—WOMEN—GIRLS.** Learn Gown Making at home. \$35.00 week. Sample lessons free. **FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. D522, Rochester, N. Y.**

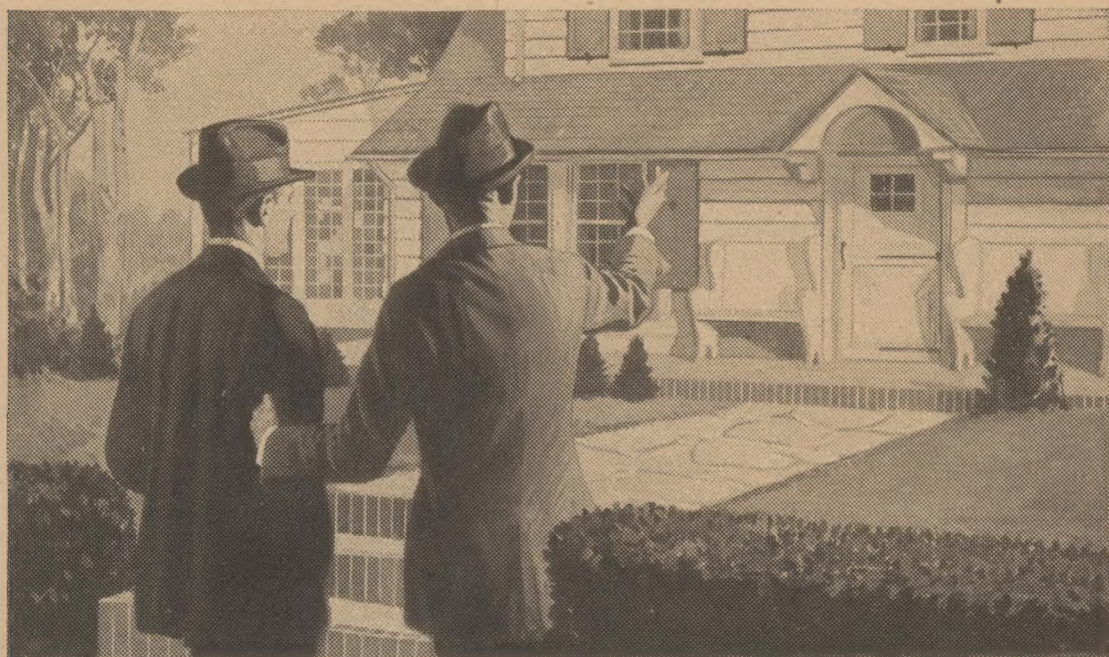
## HELP WANTED—GENERAL

**EARN UP TO \$400 MONTHLY, LIVING EXPENSES PAID. WE PLACE MEN AND WOMEN; TRAINED IN SPARE TIME AT HOME FOR HOTEL EXECUTIVE POSITIONS. EASY TERMS. FREE BOOKLET. STAND. BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE, 200 CARLTON COURT, BUFFALO, N. Y.**

## TRADE SCHOOLS

**EARN \$10 TO \$15 PER DAY.** Learn Sign and Pictorial Painting, Showcard Writing, Auto Painting, Decorating, Paperhanging, Gilding and Marbling. Catalogue Free. Chicago Painting School, 152 West Austin Ave., Chicago, Ill.





## “I Burned the Mortgage Last Week”

“THERE’S the house, Bill—and it’s all mine. I cleaned up the final payment when I got that \$500 bonus.

“Remember how we used to dream of owning our own homes? It seemed far away then, and it was. I remember how you laughed at me when I sent in that I. C. S. coupon.

“I wanted you to mail one, too, but you couldn’t see it. ‘You’re just wasting your time,’ you said. ‘It won’t do you any good.’

“But you were wrong, Bill—far wrong. It was the best investment I ever made.

“In three months after I enrolled with the International Correspondence Schools I got my first promotion and an increase in salary. In less than eighteen months I was earning three times as much as you were.

“Then I bought this house. All it cost me was an hour a day—the hour a day I spent on my I. C. S. lessons.

“Why don’t you take an I. C. S. course like I did, Bill? You’ll be surprised how interesting and fascinating it is and

how helpful. It is the surest way I know of getting a better job and a larger salary.

“That little coupon was the means of changing my whole life and it will change yours, too. Send it in to-day, Bill—you’ll never regret it.”

### INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS Box 2218-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

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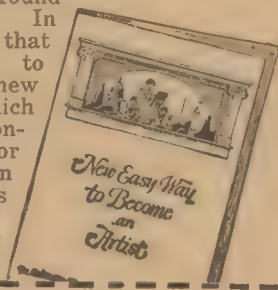
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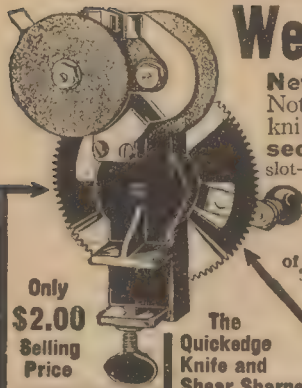
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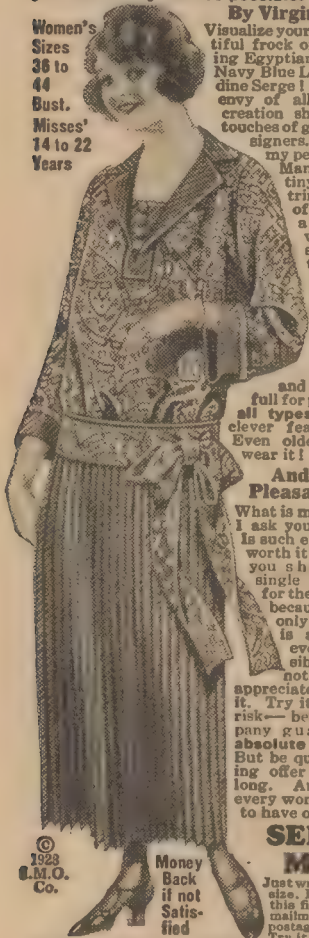
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# ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOL. CLV

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1923

NUMBER 5



## The Fourth Chum

By JOHN SCHOOLCRAFT

Author of "The Bird of Passage," "Let the Wedding Wait," etc.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE BATMAN.

SCUTT, the batman, topped his day by taking three half pints of bitter beer at the Red Lion. There was always a fire at the Red Lion built of good coals, not coke, and from one shadowed corner he could stand unobserved and watch Kate, the barmaid. Some day, when he had wound up his nerve, he would kiss Kate—just before closing time, as he had seen an Australian do it.

Kate could have had any sergeant major

in Woolwich, with the exception of the garrison sergeant major, who was a sandy little man with his eye on the widow of a confectioner in Herne Bay. Kate was big, dark-eyed, with full, curving red lips, and a dusky skin—the vivid type that crops up over all England, and must go back to the invading Danes of Alfred's time.

Night after night the batman would stand in the shadow and watch the play of her rounded arms while his heart picked up bit by bit until at closing time it was hammering in his temples. Each time his foot crossed the threshold he wondered if this



were to be the time; if there would be a special virtue in this barrel of beer which would push him up to the bar at closing time, bend him over it, and plant his lips on Kate's.

It was a picture which never failed to bring the blood into his forehead, but he had come to the conclusion that it must be when he was drinking spirits; bitter beer couldn't do it. Beyond his "'Alf pint of bitter, please, miss," he had never spoken to Kate.

The drop of dark blood in him may have made him different. The batman was one of those curious Soho hybrids; although he had never been outside London there flowed in his veins blood that had its source far south and far east.

As he remembered him, his father was not only white, but very fair, but his mother was always a sable shadow by the foggy window, where she sat all day long eating strange sweets. She always said "Yess" to any comment, and called his father "Sair."

The batman had her thin, hawk face, mottled brown eye, and while his skin was fair there were dark shadows in it, as if it had been powdered with steel dust, some of which had settled in faint lines and patches. In his instincts he was four-fifths cockney, but there was another part of him that hated sports, revelled in visions of Solomon-like luxury, and, when he had been checked by his officer for dirty spurs or leather, burst into a cold flame of resentment. For many nights after such a time the batman would lie awake gripping the sides of his iron cot, thinking of what he could do with a small, keen knife.

There was a sort of lair behind the bar among the beer pumps where sat Bill, the keeper of the pub. His close-cropped bullet head protruded above the brasses like a small beehive.

For three nights running the batman had noticed a stranger sitting in there with Bill—a keen, close-shaven man wearing a gray bowler hat, horsey plaid overcoat, and yellow gloves. He might be a bookie, or a bagman, come out from London with a supply of cheap jewelry. He was a mark, for the Red Lion was a soldier's pub, and a civilian was rarely seen.

The batman thought they had been speaking of him each of the times the stranger had been there, for at his entrance Bill had growled some word and the big, bold eyes of the stranger had begun to go over him, like a doctor's stethoscope. He was beginning to be uneasy, for there were passages in the batman's life which he had taken some pains to conceal, and it might be that this stranger, in spite of the air of Brighton about him, might be a detective, civil or military. Either would be embarrassing.

On the third night of his presence, just after the batman had shaken the fog from his overcoat and was taking his first sips of beer, the stranger arose with a sudden air of decision, came from behind the bar, and set his glass of whisky and soda on the mantel at the batman's side. He nodded, spread out his hands to the blaze and spoke.

"They tell me you're a live one," he said in a voice which, while clear, did not carry a foot beyond the soldier's ear. "Scutt, I think you and I could do business together. That's a good graft you play with the boots. But it's small—it's petty."

A cold chill crept up Scutt's spine. The stranger, then, was an inspector from Whitehall. The blood left his narrow, long-chinned face.

"Don't worry," said the stranger with a chuckle. "I'm no dick. But it's wrong for you to be playing with small stuff like that, especially since the man in the Q. M. gets most of it. I'll bet it began inside your bean, though, and a man who could work up a thing like that has possibilities."

The stranger picked up his glass and drank suddenly, as if he hated it, as hard men drink. That boot scheme had originated in the batman's head, and he was already some fifteen pounds richer for it.

It was very simple. Every man who entered the garrison was issued two pairs of boots, which he surrendered upon leaving for India or Egypt, or any other overseas service. He was then given a single new pair, his kit to be filled out on his arrival in his new unit.

The batman had conceived the idea of crediting the outgoing soldier with only one pair of boots, the other pair to be hidden,



smuggled out of garrison in a cartload of laundry, and "flogged" with a secondhand clothing merchant on the London road. There was a good civilian market for those box-toed iron-shod boots among paviors and plate layers.

And the game was good for a lifetime, provided it was not worked with too great regularity, for the adjustment on the soldier's pay book would not come for a year later, and what Tommy, with three thousand or more miles of ocean between him and Woolwich, could bring the matter home either to Scutt or to the lance corporal in the Q. M.? The only drawback was that there were too many fingers in it, so that in the end the batman who, through the medium of Bill, the pub keeper, attended to the selling end, got only a couple of bob for each pair.

"It's better than blankets," went on the stranger with his big eyes still on the miserable batman, "or flogging stuff out of the cook house. God, the time you guys (" 'E's a Namerican," thought the batman) will spend in working up some tiny graft like that and think it's big. But I can tell you there's bigger game afoot, if you're man enough to tackle it.

"Bill says you're square with your pals and that you can keep your trap shut. But first I want you to understand two things—one is that I'm in earnest. Here's that that says I am."

With a flash of his hand he produced a bank note, concealed from the string of Pay Corps soldiers at the bar, and held it for a moment so that the batman could see the ornamental figures on it. Then he slipped it under the flap of the soldier's pocket.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars," said the stranger. "Fifty pounds in your money. That's for you. It ain't a fake either. The second thing you've got to get through your head is that you're to play square with me. I have enough on you to send you to college for a stretch, and these military prisons are hell. That's clear now, ain't it?"

The batman swallowed hard. There had been a burst of the cold flame within him at the implied threat in the stranger's voice, but when he thought of the fifty quid

tucked away in his pocket the flame died down.

"There's a thousand more where that came from," said the stranger, "if this thing goes through. There's no danger in it for you, or for any of us, if it's handled right. Are you on?"

Again the batman swallowed hard and said: "I'd go to hell for the 'alf of it."

"Good," answered the other, and drank again. When he set his glass down and wiped his lips with a spotted silk handkerchief, his face was earnest. The batman had a glimpse of the steel behind the brass, of the wolf behind the fox mask.

"How long have you been in the service?"

"Since April, 1918."

"I know. You were picked up on one of the last drafts. And you didn't go to France for the reason that you paid the sergeant major a quid to keep you off the draft. And you've stuck here ever since the war shining Angelsey's boots. It's an easy job. You just might have heard of a soldier named Richard Pearsley. Have you? He died in garrison in June, 1918."

The batman dropped his eyes and thought.

"No. I cawn't say that I 'ave."

"It ain't likely you would. He was in Cambridge Barracks most of the time—he was a signaller. He'd been in the army since he was a kid, and I guess he was the first man in France in 1914. And Thomas Crill must have been the second. You remember Crill, don't you?"

"Crill," mused the batman. "There's somethink about that nyme. Crill. Ow, aye! 'E was drowned!"

"Yes. Swimming horses in some stinking pond over by the magazines. He and Pearsley were chums—had been ever since they went to the home for soldiers' orphans. More like man and wife than two men. After Crill died Pearsley began to act queer—up to that time he'd been a model soldier, but all of a sudden he went plumb to hell, sassed the sergeant; overstayed his leave every time he got to London.

"Finally they took him up one night after he'd come back a week overdue and put him in the clink. He never came out



alive. He died in the barracks jail; he was laid out in the hospital, and buried in a little town in Northamptonshire.

"Now here's the point, Scutt," finished the stranger, drawing closer to the batman and fixing him with his big, shrewd eye, "when that man went into the barracks gate, he had stones on him that might be worth fifty thousand pounds—easily. I *know* that, and I know that the people who laid him out didn't get them, and I know that they weren't buried with him. I've taken some trouble to make sure.

"It's my theory that he hid them in the barracks jail, and your job is to get yourself shut up in there long enough to find out. My God, I'd enlist myself if they'd take me. But they wouldn't—flat feet and God knows what not. Can you do it?"

The stranger moved toward the fire, leaving his message to sink into the soldier's mind. It took a long time, for Scutt was suspicious, and he had to turn it over and over in his head.

The bar was empty for the moment, and Bill waddled out and stoked the crackling fire. By the time the pub keeper had rolled back to his creaking chair by the beer pumps, the batman's answer was ready. He could see no holes in it that weren't worth the risk.

And there was a sense of solidity about the stranger, of hard purpose. The batman guessed him to be an American and he wondered if he were one of those New York gunmen about whom he read in the Sunday newspapers. He put out his hand.

"I'm with you."

"Good," answered the other, and ignored the hand. "Now, then, overstay leave, slug a lance jack, do anything you can to get yourself into the clink for a few days. I leave it to you—only start soon. I can stand anything but delay. I'll be in and out here every evening until I hear from you.

"You can get word through the corporal of the guard, as long as you're lined. I know—God, I look at these big sergeant majors walking the streets here as if they were old Haig and Haig and I say to myself: 'I know how much would buy you—just one unlucky two-dollar bill would do

it.' Go to it now. I've told you everything I know."

He began to pull on his gloves.

"But there's so much to be arrynged," objected the batman, who was not used to such direct methods of dealing, "so much that I know nothink about."

"My name for instance. It's Wales," said the other, while a grin wrinkled his face, "Jimmy Wales. Bill doesn't know what I'm talking to you about. Somebody tipped me off to him in London, and I blew down here and asked him to tip me off to some wise guy inside. I guess he thinks I want to buy boots.

"Those stones were all diamonds, and Pearsley carried them in a little roll of flannel about as big as my thumb. I don't know how many there were—nobody does. It's my hunch he found 'em in some *château* in France—he and Crill, when they were up in some turret doing their flagtalk. I believe they brought them back to blighty with them and carried them around, waiting until the time should come when they would be discharged.

"Then after Crill was drowned, they began to prey on Pearsley's mind—he was a simple old sod, if what I hear is true. He must have been, to try to get rid of 'em the way he did. If I had the crown jewels I wouldn't take 'em into a little Jew shop in Edgeware Road, would I? After he'd shown one, he got the wind up and beat it.

"He was followed right up to the barracks gate—and he never came out of the garrison alive. If you find the stones, O. K.; if you don't, there's fifty quid for your trouble. I'll be going. So-long."

He put a cigar in his mouth and lighted it while the batman stared, for it had taken almost a year to work up the boot game, and here was a deal with a thousand pounds in it for himself, arranged in fifteen minutes. There might be more, for there was always a chance in any deal like this that the middleman might somehow or other get the principal's share. The batman squared his thin shoulders, and walking to the bar set down his glass.

"Bitter?" asked Kate.

"No. A spot of whisky."

"Whisky?" repeated Kate, with a faint-



ly mocking smile. "Soldier, did 'e give you a tip?"

This was the time, thought the batman. She took the stranger to be a bookie, and she took it that he was in the stranger's confidence. If only he could sing out: "Whitefoot, twenty to one. Hurst Park. You cawn't miss!" Instead he stood still, shifting from one foot to the other, and said: "'E didn't give me anythink this time. But 'e's going to, and I'll pawss it along."

"'E's a Namerican, ain't 'e?" asked Kate.

"Yes."

"I thought as much. You can tell by the 'igh way of talking. There's another 'ere in the garrison, young chap by the nyme of Morgan. 'E's a queer, sad lad, and big—Gawd, with 'is 'at off, 'e looks like a drum major of the Guards with 'is 'at on. 'E's been driving the adjutant's car."

"'E's in the clink now," growled Bill from his corner. "'E drove it into a stone wall and made a bloomin' pork pie of it."

"Ah, poor lad," sighed Kate. "'E knows wot it's like by now and maybe 'e won't mind it so much. This other bloke," she said to the batman, "'e's a bookie, ain't he? And 'e's getting you for his aigent inside the garrison. You cawn't fool the old Kyte. Wot 'll it be?" This to a small soldier from the Veterinary Corps, whose head scarcely cleared the bar.

"Pint of stout!" bellowed the little soldier, and pushed the batman out of the way. The latter finished his whisky, hung about the fire for a moment, then put up the collar of his overcoat and went out into the wet night. Kate watched him go, and her lips formed the words: "Keep your — tips to your — self. 'Oo wants 'em? I don't. I don't like that bloke—'e gives me the shivers."

A mist with scattering rain was blowing up from the Thames. The gas lamps glowed within halos of fog, like fog-bound stars. The touch of the harsh brick on his hand told the batman that he was Thomas Scutt, living, with one thousand pounds in sight. He felt bigger, stronger, and that Oriental fifth of him became a fourth.

To-morrow he would get himself in the clink—there was nothing easier in the Brit-

ish army, where a man, simply for being silent under the cursings of his sergeant, could be spun for "dumb insolence." There was a bombardier in charge of the dining hall whom the batman hated, and who on his side loved nothing better than to send a soldier to confinement. The bombardier thought himself the lineal successor of "Old Bill"; he was always saying: "'Ullo, 'ullo, 'ullo, 'ullo!" and he was always rapping the batman on the knuckles when the latter tried to palm a second piece of bread.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE CLINK.

IT was easy. The dining hall bombardier had lost his week's pay at brag the night before and was in an ugly humor. It took only a word to fire him.

The only trouble was that the batman went a little farther than he expected—he laid his hand on the bombardier, and the hushed chewing about him and the looks he received as he passed out of the dining hall under escort gave him a momentary chill. They looked at him as if he were going to the gallows, not to the clink for a few days. But he was Captain Angelsey's servant, and Angelsey would see to it that he was not punished too severely.

The batman had not known that he could be so insanely angry—he was still shaking with it when he marched into the barracks jail, whither the major had consigned him pending his trial. If the knife he had carried into the dining hall had been a real knife, things might have happened—

The clink was a small square of a building tucked in between the coal yard and the depot bathhouse. Its door opened out onto a cobbled walled lane. Within there was the guard room, where the corporal was toasting bread over the coal fire; one gunner stood guard at the door, while the others lay about on two wide wooden shelves on which they had spread their blankets.

The batman's eye was already exploring the guard room as his officer gave him in charge. There was not much chance of hiding anything there, nor was there in the small cell to which the corporal of the guard



led him. He passed from the guard room into a corridor, through an iron door with a small square hole in it at about face height. One end of the corridor ended in the blank wall of the depot bath house; the other opened into an exercise yard. There were smaller doors along the corridor, of wood, each with a small, square hole at face height.

At one of these the batman caught a glimpse of a face resting on a pair of big forearms. Beyond the fact that he was so tall that he had to stoop to look out of the aperture in his door, the batman saw little of his fellow prisoner, but it came to him that this must be the big American of whom Kate had spoken.

When the door was closed and locked and the corporal had gone back to toasting his bread, the batman looked about him. There was one chance out of four that this had been Pearsley's cell, for he had seen that there were just four doors in the narrow corridor. It was a small room, with a single barred window, high up.

It contained an iron cot, but, as far as he could see, no other possible hiding place. He squeezed the hard mattress, and wondered whether he could get it open without being discovered. After a time, when he had got on the good side of the corporal of the guard, he might beg a needle and thread on the plea of torn clothing. He could open the "biscuits" at night, and sew them up before the next morning.

The walls were of hard plaster over brick, and they contained a history of that cell, and almost a history of the British army. There were names, initials, dates running far back beyond the Crimean War, and messages blaspheming generals who had long since passed along the parade behind muffled drums. "Roll on, German navy," one Tommy had written in the humorous despair of confinement.

There was just a chance that Pearsley might have put his own initials somewhere on that record, and the batman knelt on his cot and scrutinized that patch of wall where the writing was thickest. And there he found an initial P., recently cut.

At first he passed it over, for it stood as one of several letters enclosed in a sort of lozenge by a line. R. P., T. C., H. V. the ini-

tials read, and it was only when he had come across them a half dozen times on the stretch of wall just above the cot that the batman began to study and to wonder.

Then it came to him—the first stood for Richard Pearsley, the second stood for Thomas Crill, but what the third name might be he did not know. He hugged his knees and checked the exultation which welled up within him.

He heard the corporal of the guard walking in the corridor outside his door, and putting his head out of the aperture hailed him.

"I say, corporal, this was Pearsley's cell, wasn't it?"

The corporal looked at him for a startled moment, and in that moment the batman heard the slow stir of a big body in the cell next his own.

"Aye," answered the corporal. "Why do you ask?"

"'E's written his nyme all over the wall. And under it, 'e's put a T. C. and under that a H. V."

"Bli'me! It's old Pearsley still thinkink about 'is chum, Crill. They was a funny pair. They'd been in the army since Adam was a lance-jack. Crill was drowned swim-mink 'osses, and arter it Pearsley went all to 'ell. 'E got into the clink and never come out alive. Gawd love a duck! It shows wot a soldier's life will do to a bloke!"

"Aye, but wot's the H. V.?" asked the batman.

"I couldn't tell you. Arsk the Yank 'ere. 'E was with Pearsley while 'e was in the clink 'ere, and 'e was with 'im when he died."

"Ah," said the batman to himself, with a tightening of his pulse. He bent his head and listened, and heard a stir from the cell next his own. After a pause the man next him spoke.

"There were three of them originally—three chums. They went into the army as trumpeters together, Pearsley, Crill, and Vine. Vine was wounded in 1914 and discharged."

"Oh," said the batman. "Thanks, old un. 'Struth, he must have been a rummy cove to write things all over the wall this way."



'E was a bit barmy, wasn't 'e? Seems like I've 'eard that he went all to 'ell after Crill was drowned."

There was no answer from the next cell. The batman could hear the stir of the big body, but the man did not speak, and a sudden flame of anger started up in the batman. If it should turn out that this big soldier had the stones now—if Pearsley had turned them over to him on his death bed—well, the pistol made little men and big men equal.

Bugles blew for stables, and the trumpeter of the guard clattered out to get the tea buckets. As that iron-shod rattle faded into an echo among the brick walls, there was a soft, heavy tread in the guard room. The batman heard the click of the corporal's heels as he sprang to attention, and then the big, booming voice of Todd, brigade sergeant major.

"'Ave you a prisoner 'ere named Morgan?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll 'ave a word with 'im."

The outer door swung open, and the heavy tread entered and paused at the cell where the tall soldier was confined. The batman drew close to his own door, crouched, and listened. The prisoner came to attention, and the sergeant major said in a lowered voice: "'Ere, you soppy fool, step up 'ere and let me 'ave a look at you."

In spite of the words there was a trace of friendliness in the voice. The prisoner was an inch taller than Todd, and the batman thought to himself with the venom rankling in his breast that it was always the little runts who got the hell.

"Now, then, 'ow long are you in for?"

"Seven more days, plus nine hours and thirty minutes, sir."

The voice was low, clear, almost expressionless.

"That's ten years too little. But it's five days too much. 'Ow did you 'appen to do it? You ruined a thousand guineas of government property."

"I was driving the adjutant down a little walled lane. It was almost dark, not quite—then I saw a—ghost."

"A ghost! See 'ere, my man, don't try any of your bloody tricks with me!"

"I swear I saw a woman step out in front of the machine. It was a question of hitting her or taking the wall. The adjutant didn't see her, and he swore there was no one there. I got out after the machine crashed and went back, but I couldn't find any one. I didn't touch her; I know she wasn't hurt.

"But it's the same ghost that other men have been seeing around here—a little woman in a big cape with a broad hat. I've heard of them seeing her by the garrison church, late at night, and in the gun park late at night, and one man told me he's seen her on the main parade at two in the morning. So far nobody's seen her in daylight.

"That's my story and I'll stick to it, I saw her just as I was leaning over to turn on the lights."

The sergeant major was silent for a good minute. The batman could hear him turning his cane in his hands.

"Let that pawss," he said after a time.

"Ghost or not, you ruined the adjutant's car, and 'e's 'ot. But there's to be gymes and exhibition drill Saturday—day after to-morrow.

"The 'oss artillery goes into action, and your battery sergeant major swears they cawn't do it without you for number six, to un'ook the trail from the limber when the teams are at the gallop. There's to be a picked team from each battery, and that barmy fool thinks there ain't a man in your battery but you that can do it. They'll be trying for a record. More shame to your unit!

"And that's the tyle you 'ave to tell—a ghost stepped out into the road and you 'ad to tyke the wall! Is that the best you can do?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was a child, you blawsted fool!"

"No, sir."

"Don't give me none of your lip!" said Todd in a voice of suppressed fury. "It was children—one or two or three of them, Orphans they were, coming from a picnic, soldiers' orphans. The adjutant didn't see 'em, because by the time 'e'd pulled himself together they'd all scampered."

There was a faint, ironic chuckle.

"Yes, sir, maybe they were children."



"Of course they were! Now, then, they will be trying for a record, as I've said. It 'll all depend on which number six gets in between the wheels soonest and gets 'is gun un'ooked first. If your team wins, you are released—at least I don't think you'll come back to clink. Not if I can 'elp it, and I can tell the tyle. But if your team don't win, you'll come back, and Gawd 'elp you.

"But remember they were little girl orphans, seven or eight of 'em, frightened and not able to move out of the road. When you look at it right, you ought to get a medal after the next church parade. Stay 'ere for the night. Do you box?"

There was a long pause, then the batman heard a low answer pitched in a key of actual suffering.

"No, I don't box."

"'Old up your 'ead when you talk to me. And don't forget to address a sergeant major as sir! You could box if you would, you lazy blighter, and bring some honor to your unit. Of all the idiots! Report to your battery officer to-morrow morning at nine o'clock."

The batman heard the stir of the big body again, and the low, ironic voice said: "Suppose I refuse?"

"Refuse!" said the sergeant major, after a pause in which the batman felt the hair rising on his scalp at such audacity. "You cawn't!"

"Well, the clink isn't so bad. You get food and shelter, and nobody to bellow at you."

"Strike me!" said the officer in a whisper. "Wot do you want?"

"Nothing. Yes—one thing. Is there a good, strong safe in the garrison?"

"A syfe? No. Wot 'ave you? There's a strong box in each battery office where the railway warrants are kept, but they've been forced more than once. If you 'ave anythink of value, 'ang onto it yourself or give it to your officer. 'E'll keep it for you. And now, then," he said, raising his voice for the benefit of the guard, "you 'ave your orders. You're to report for gun drill with your battery to-morrow."

"Yes, sir."

"And for Gawd's sake, pull yourself to-

gether and try to act like a live soldier! You're the new army! You're the lot that 'ave to be treated like gentlemen! If you're a soldier," he concluded in a voice of inexpressible fury, "*I'm a field marshal!*"

"I'll do my best to make it a good show," was the unmoved answer.

When the sergeant major had gone the batman crept back to his cot. The chances were ten to one that the tall man had the stones, and he was bound for freedom. He rocked to and fro on his cot, suddenly sick with fury, planning, wondering what he should do. He might get word to Wales, but if he did so while he himself was in confinement it was probable that Wales would put the thing through without him, and that thousand pounds which had glowed before him since their interview at the Red Lion would be gone.

No, it was better to wait. Angelsey would get him out to-morrow; he would be free by the time Morgan could leave barracks, and he would report to Wales then. And in the meantime he would do his best to know for certain whether the tall soldier had Pearsley's stones on him.

The tea buckets banged as the trumpeter returned. Bugles sang the feed call, and the corporal opened the big door and called them out for exercise. The batman got up quickly, received the bowl of tea, the slice of bread, the bit of cheese, and spread his portion of jam from the general dish which the trumpeter held out to him. Then he turned down the passage, walking slowly, so that he could get a glimpse into the cell next his own.

Its occupant sat on his cot, his head bowed in his hands. The spy could see that he was big and young. The light fell on a head of closely curling brown hair and long, strong, white hands.

But in spite of his youth there was an air of complete dejection about the man, as if he had been totally and irrevocably cast down. The batman, as he walked on toward the exercise yard; remembered what Kate had said: "A sad, queer lad."

The exercise yard was a small, walled inclosure, cobbled with loaflike stones. At one end, the end which would have received the sun on a fine day, was a bench. At the



other was a pile of coal reaching to within six feet of the coping, and above the top of that wall showed the hump of the larger pile of fuel in the coal yard.

The batman sat down and looked at that black pile in the corner. A tall man could get to the top of the wall by means of it and drop into the coal yard. That was locked, but the old soldier who conducted it was not formidable. A tall man, like the Yank, could get to the top of the wall without a leap.

He sat nursing the warm bowl between his knees and spread the jam on his bread. The tall prisoner was coming to be more and more of a factor in his plans.

"Damn 'im," whispered the batman, "I'll knife 'im for 'em if I 'ave to!"

His fellow prisoner appeared in the doorway, balancing his bowl of tea on his bread. He crossed the yard as a rope walker might, and the batman's eye ran up the long, muscular legs, the thin-waisted, broad-chested trunk, to the well-shaped head. This was the first time the batman had had a clear view of his man, and his mottled eye was keen.

His first judgment was that Morgan would be an ugly customer in a fight—he looked like a boxer, big as any man in the garrison, but quick. What a sight he must be in a shell jacket, boots, and the fur cap of the regiment! It was no wonder that there had been that lurking friendliness in Todd's voice when he spoke.

And he was young—not much more than a lad—but the face was curiously bitter. Melancholy and indifference marked it.

The batman moved over hospitably as the tall soldier reached the bench, and the other sat down.

"What are you in for?" he asked in a gentle drawl.

"Sluggin' the dining 'all bombardier."

Morgan looked at him and whistled.

"Why didn't you jump in front of a gun team and be done with it?"

"'E's a bloke that always did myke me see red. I got fed up with 'im."

Morgan was silent for a full five minutes, in which he was busy with his bread and tea. Then he turned to the batman with a curious smile.

"I used to feel that way, too, son. I used to think I was a man with a real soul, but I got over it. You will, too, when you've been in long enough. It doesn't do a guy any harm, though," he finished, "to find out that he isn't the irresistible force he thinks he is. Were you drunk?"

"No."

"I was, the first time I tried it. You must be an overseas man—Canadian or Australian."

"No. I'm cockney, born within sound of Bow Bells—almost."

"Then you're crazy," said the other. "Any man who slugs his superior officer in this man's army without being a colonial is either drunk or crazy."

With that he leaned his head against the wall, folded his arms over his chest, and closed his eyes. The batman hated him.

"Angelsey 'll get me out," he said in a loud voice. "I'm 'is batman. 'E's told me time and agayn there wasn't anybody that could get the shine on leather and brass that I can. I'll polish up your buttons while I'm in clink. Give me your tunic some time, mate, and I'll myke the buttons look like they was gold."

"No, thanks," returned Morgan in a distant voice. He stretched, got up, and began to shadow box. He danced a dozen paces on the rough stones, feinting, guarding and striking. The batman listened to the whish of the big fists through the air, and a chill went up his spine.

But suddenly the man went limp all over. He stopped dead in his tracks and his arms fell to his sides. He stood with his head bowed.

"'Ere," said the batman, getting up; "I'll wrestle you, soldier."

He had never wrestled, and he hated all sports, but it was in his mind that in wrestling he might be able to pick the tall soldier's pockets. He put out his arms awkwardly, but the other man recoiled and put up a hand.

"No!" he said violently. "No!"

"Righto," answered the batman, and dropped back, puzzled by the other's emotion.

Morgan shivered and pressed his hands



over his eyes. After a short time he faced the batman with a queer, sad smile. His hand sought his pocket.

"Have a cigarette?" he asked, and took out a worn Capstan box from one of the upper tunic pockets, opened the flap, and then snatched it back with a flashing glance at the batman.

"That's the wrong one," he said, and produced a packet of Woodbines. The tall soldier held a match for him, and they smoked in silence. But the batman was thinking with a thunderous beating of his heart that it was just like this queer bloke to keep the stones in a Capstan box and in his coat pocket.

The corporal called them in, and they did not meet again until just before bedtime, when they were turned out for five minutes in the wash room. The Yank was coatless. He leaned over a hand basin with his eyes closed and covered with suds. He heard the batman's footsteps, and said: "Hello, mate."

"What cheer, old chum?"

The batman filled a basin on the opposite side of the room and splashed in it. He washed in a manner which, while leisurely, was timed to finish a full two minutes before his fellow prisoner would be through. When he had wiped himself dry and rolled his toilet kit into a ball, he walked to the door of the wash room, paused for an unhurried look down the corridor toward the exercise yard, then turned toward his own cell.

At his own door he stopped, turned, and tiptoed swiftly back to Morgan's door. The light from the gas tip in the guard room struck through and showed the tunic lying on the cot. Swiftly his thin fingers plumbed the upper pocket that held the battered Capstan box, drew it out, and opened it.

He held it up and shook it, and held his breath at the living spark that dropped into the palm of his hand. It was a diamond, as big as his little finger nail. There were others under his fingers, still in the box.

Then his eyes fell on the tall soldier's boots standing under the cot, and panic seized him. When he had entered he had it in his mind that he would hear the first

step the other made away from the wash stand, but if he were stockingless the tall man could come noiselessly down the corridor.

The batman replaced the stone in the box and the box in the pocket in a panic of fear, just as the tall soldier blotted out the light of the doorway. For a moment the two faced each other, then Morgan took two long strides into the room.

A hand reached out toward the batman, then with that curious shudder which had swept over him as he was shadow boxing in the yard, he dropped it, and stepped back. The batman spoke in a voice which he tried to make cool.

"I thought I'd give your buttons a shine, just to keep me 'and in. The smoke and fog tykes the shine off somethink frightful."

Morgan's hand swept the tunic up into the curve of his arm.

"You're one of the kindest hearted chaps I ever did see," he said, and pushed the batman out of the door.

### CHAPTER III.

#### CROSSROADS.

THE batman had been waiter, barber, and servant to a small salaried teacher at Westminster School. Never until now had Fortune come so close to him that he could feel the touch of her garment. Now that he knew what it was to have fifty quid in his pocket, with a thousand more in sight, the batman felt himself a new being, hard, determined—one who would never flinch when it came to using knife or gun.

Never again would he trundle the perambulator up the steps of the teacher's house. When this job was done he would drift to the Far East, Constantinople, or Cairo, or Port Said, where life could be, for a man with a little money in his pocket, unbelievably luxurious. All night he lay on his cot while a torrent of hot thought poured through his brain.

He was confident. He knew that after the war there had been a tremendous relaxation in discipline. He had seen more than one N. C. O. checked and even broken



for harsh treatment of men. There had been an inevitable rebellion after the armistice, and contact with colonial troops had made the Tommy think.

Thirty days' pay stopped, or perhaps a fortnight's confinement to barracks, would be the limit of Scutt's punishment; and what was the loss of thirty days' pay when he had fifty pounds under his left knee? And he could always get around confinement to barracks, for he had a little bunk of his own and, as a captain's servant, was detached from battery duty. The real difficulty was that the man in the cell next him would be free to move about in barracks by nine o'clock in the morning, whereas he would possibly be detained until noon.

It was the major's custom to mete out punishments just after the battery had dispersed to gun and driving drill, and sometimes, when the list was long, he was at it until stables blew at half past eleven. In that period his fellow prisoner might get rid of the stones, but the batman thought that, all in all, there was not much chance of that.

He was the kind of crazy blighter who would carry many thousand pounds of jewels about in his tunic pocket and hang his tunic on a peg where any trumpeter could rifle the pockets of it for cigarettes. With these comforting thoughts he fell asleep, and awoke in the same high humor.

When he went to the wash room, the Yank was shaving. The soap, plus the effort of crouching so that he could see his face in the mirror, killed conversation. But the batman noted that he wore his tunic and that the pocket flaps were all buttoned tight. When the tall man had finished shaving he gathered up his things and went back to his cell, where the batman heard him polishing.

After breakfast he left with grave greetings to the members of the guard, but no word for his fellow prisoner, who stood in the wash room door and looked out upon the coal pile in the corner of the exercise yard. That pile was one of the curious laxities in the strictest army in the world—a desperate prisoner could make his escape over it, and every corporal of the guard knew it; but each had shrugged his shoul-

der and told himself that he wasn't the one who had started it. He would take a chance and trust to luck that the escape over the coal pile would come in the guard after his own.

And in the meantime the guard room had three times its proper ration of coal to burn. As the batman watched, the two newest members of the guard came out with a tub and filled it to the brim and carried it inside as if they were carrying gold.

He heard the bugles singing general assembly all over the garrison, and the clamor of iron-shod feet as the sections fell in outside stables. Then came the barking of orders, tramping of feet, the clatter of horses as the gun teams and riding classes filed out under the arches, and then silence.

With his heart picking up, he gave his buttons and shoes an extra touch, for he knew that he would soon be facing the major, and that a clean soldier always got a lighter sentence than a dirty one. An escort came for him—two gunners with carbines, and a bombardier—and as he heard the rifle butts strike the stone a chill crept over him. But every prisoner who went in to see the major had an armed guard, and his confidence held.

The major was not alone. There was a ring of grave officers behind him, among them Captain Angelsey, who looked at his servant without a sign of recognition. The dining hall bombardier was there, and the batman heard his crime recited in minute detail, not omitting the swear words that had passed between them.

When the story was finished the major looked up at the batman and said: "Have you anything to say for yourself?" And he, knowing that an officer hates a glib criminal, said: "No, sir." He waited for his sentence, confinement to barracks, or stopping of pay, but instead the major dismissed him without a word. For a moment he had a wild hope that he was to go scot-free, but the bombardier gave, "Left, turn! Quick march!" and led him back to the jail.

It was queer, he thought, as he sat on his cot, but still he was confident. Well, Angelsey was a mild mannered sort of man to whom all the soldiers turned in times of



private trouble; Angelsey would put in a word for him.

Angelsey did, as a gentleman is bound to put in a word for his servant. But it was only a feeble one, for Angelsey did not care much for the batman. And the major thought that discipline must be maintained, and that an example should be set which would impress the post-war recruits, a lot so weedy that the Royal Horse had been forced to lower its standard of six feet for gunners and five feet ten for drivers to five feet ten for gunners and five feet eight for drivers. The major favored a year at hard labor, which was finally reduced to six months, the sentence to be given in proper court-martial fashion before the assembled brigade.

At noon the escort came again for the batman, who was still confident. They halted him outside the battery office. The men were still in stables, and he could see that those who came outside to fill feed tins or water buckets paused for a brief second to look at him. Feed call sounded and the square rang with the clattering of hoofs and the whinnying and nickering of hungry animals.

After feeding, the men should have poured up the stairs to the dining hall; instead they fell in in sections while a knot of officers came from behind him and walked to the middle of the square. The sergeant major bellowed an order, and the sections advanced, marched by the flank, and formed three sides of a square, on the fourth side of which the officers ranged themselves. But there was one gap, and it suddenly came to the batman that that open space was for him.

"Step off, soldier!" whispered the bombardier in charge of his escort, for the batman had been so stunned that he had not heard the order to march forward. Mechanically he obeyed. The dun-walled square reeled, and the patches of red geraniums in the window boxes of R Battery swelled into big crimson blots.

"Tyke off your 'at," said the sergeant major; and when the batman, too stunned to obey, did not comply, took off his hat for him. He was pushed two paces forward, where he stood, dizzy, with his eyes on the

ground. He felt suddenly disarmed, with his hat off, and all those eyes upon him.

A pink cheeked subaltern hung his cane over his arm and, taking a paper from the major's hand, began to read in a low voice, stumbling over the long words like a school-boy reciting on prize day. The batman caught his name and his number and the nature of the crime, and at the end his sentence tolled: "Six months at hard labor."

He fell back, some one clapped his hat on his head, and he was faced about and marched back to his cell, while the square thundered from the feet pounding on the stairs and along the gallery to the dining hall. Back in his cell, he threw himself on the cot, physically sick from the anger that blazed in him.

*Six months at hard labor!* It would be away from Woolwich, away from London, where he could not see Wales, nor Wales him. He put his head in his hands and shook in a fever of murderous frenzy. After a time that passed, and he could look at his position more calmly.

There were two things he could do—resign himself to his fate and become once again the diffident, halting servant who had trundled the perambulator up and down the steps for the teacher's wife and who had been afraid to kiss a barmaid, or he could struggle, grasp at the prize which fortune had held out to him, and try to make his escape over the coal pile.

There was no doubt which he would choose, for, in that few minutes in the square, something had changed in the batman. The venom boiled in him, and he felt a sudden outpouring of fierce energy. It was one of the moments in which a good man dies and a criminal is born.

It ought to be easy, this getting away, for it was another anomaly that there was no guard so easy to get away from in the world as a British Army guard. The batman could call to mind a half dozen escapes in Woolwich, and he knew of a dozen others in Ireland.

He looked out of his window and saw that the day was overcast, and that the roofs were damp from mist. About teatime that mist would thicken to a fog, and under



cover it he would try for an escape over the wall.

He lay down, for his head was hammering, and he felt that his eyes were bloodshot. He tried to lie still, but his body would shake, and red, dripping visions would swim across the blank wall.

He had heard that in China condemned men were put to death by slicing. God help the major if he ever had him chained. Then it would be the Yank, and then Captain Angelsey, and then the dining hall bombardier.

If he had got to France, he would have put one of those cocky subalterns where he belonged; many a man had done it. There was another man in the garrison whom he had met at a canteen; he, too, had a drop of dark blood in him, and there had been a current of understanding between them at first sight.

This chap had done it. He had told him in whispers of how he had got a sergeant major in the back just as they went over the top. He knew of another, too, who had been pushed under a railway train. The batman had sat still, listening, while something within him awoke at the whispered retailing of horrors.

"Gawd!" he said to himself as he rolled on his face to shut out the dim, bloody shapes that drifted between him and the wall. "I'll show them, if I get the chawncel!"

He lay quiet until he heard the trumpeter bringing in the tea buckets; then he got up and waited for the opening of his door. With his bowl and slices of bread in his hand, he went out into the empty exercise yard, and his first glance was at the coal pile. Some one had been across and had heaved over more contraband chunks, and the pile was higher. Still it would take more agility than he had ever shown before to make the run and the leap that would take him over.

He drank his tea and watched the light darken as the mist thickened with the coming of the night. Gas tips began to flare in the main barrack building.

He waited until it was near time for him to return to his cell, then arose, took a short run across the yard, mounted the pile

and leaped for the coping. It was the supreme physical effort of his life; his fingers caught, and he hung for a moment, then he swung one of his legs up and got an arm over.

After that it was easy. He lay along the top and looked down into the gloomy cavern of the coal yard. It was empty, but the big red gate was shut, and not only barred but locked. Through a barred window, dim with coal dust, flared a tiny gas tip, and the glow of a fire reddened the bars. That was a tiny office where the old soldier in charge of the coal lived and padded out his eighteen bob a week by the income from an illicit distribution of fuel.

It was well known that he was open to a bribe, but there were queer turns in the characters of these old ones. Sometimes they would take a shilling for a share in some other man's coal, and at other times they would curse and damn as if they were recording angels.

The batman let himself down onto the coal pile and gained the ground as quietly as he could. In spite of his catlike movements a small avalanche of fuel poured down behind him, and he quickly picked up one or the half dozen wicker baskets lying at the foot of the coal pile and filled it.

Then he walked through the low door into the soldier's bunk. The old man dozed by the grate. On the hob was a pot of tea and a herring bubbling in a shallow pan of water.

He waked up as the batman entered, and the latter cursed himself for making as much noise as he had; otherwise he might have tiptoed by the old man without waking him. The soldier sat up straight and stared at the escaped prisoner out of a popping blue eye. He arose.

"'Ow did you get in 'ere?"

"Through the big door."

The old man peered out into the gloom. "It's closed."

"I know, old chum. I closed it." The batman felt the flame rising in him. He placed a shilling on the table, and said: "This is for R Battery office. The big door was open a crack. It's a good job I



closed it before some of those trumpeters saw it—you wouldn't 'ave 'ad a piece of coal in the 'ole plyce."

The soldier drew himself up—he was a stubborn old "swett"—he had taken part in a half dozen Indian hill campaigns long since forgotten except in the records of the War Department. The faded green, blue and red ribbons were on his soiled jacket. He stepped away from the grate and put himself between the batman and the door.

"You and your tyle!" he said. "You come over the wall from the clink, that's where you come from! You're an escyped prisoner! I know every bloke in R Battery's office as well as I know my own nyme and number, and if you're one of them, I'm old Bobs himself!"

"'Ave a care," said the batman in a low voice, "'ave a care wot you do, old mate."

"Bah!" said the old man in contempt. "'Oos afryd of you? I've told 'em a dozen times some bloke would be 'opping off over the wall and getting down by the coal pile. A dozen times I've spoke to the sergeant major about it, but 'e's always told me to mind my own business."

"But I know if you get away through 'ere, I'll get a dishonorable discharge without a pension. Now, then, you march ahead of me to the nearest battery office and give yourself up. Come along now! Shyke a leg!"

"No," said the batman, and set down his basket of coal. He was dizzy with fury, and the old man seemed to waver in front of him in a mist of red. He was unarmed, except for the handkerchief which he carried up his sleeve, and to no one but a man who had spent his youth in Greek Street would a silk handkerchief have been a weapon.

But the batman's youth had been thrilled by tales of that mysterious epidemic of garroting which had swept London in the seventies. Those tales had lain in his mind like burrs.

"Don't be 'ard on an old myte," he said. "You'd get out yourself if you 'ad the chawnce, and you was in my boots. It's getting out now or six months at 'ard labor,

There might be a good bit of money in it for you."

The old soldier thrust forward an arm and pointed to the almost indistinguishable lance-corporal's stripe on it.

"'Shun!" he said. "Quick march!"

He turned to unlatch the door, but the batman was on him before he could open it. The silken noose went over his head, and the batman, with his knee in the small of the man's back, twisted with all his suddenly great strength. His victim choked once and clawed at the door, but the man behind him swung him about and he fell.

He was a chunky, wheezy, old man, and it had been the batman's intention, as far as his sudden fury gave him an intention, to disable him until he could make his escape. But there was life and a queer sense of duty in the old soldier, and he put up such a fight, struggled, and threw himself about so, that the batman put both hands in his tourniquet and twisted savagely.

He held until the stocky body was still, and when he reeled to his feet and wiped the sweat from his face with shaking hands he knew that he, Thomas Scutt, was a murderer. There was no going back now—he had reached the crossroads and taken that left-hand turn which leads to the underworld of crime.

He was sick and nauseated, but he felt no regret, no compunction. Even the sight of the glaring blue eye of the old man, suddenly red in the light of the snapping grate, nor the protruding tongue, moved him. He was suddenly cool. He must hide the old man, so that he should not be discovered until long after he was safe out of barracks.

Lights were beginning to flare along the galleries, and the square was full of smoky gloom through which moved the ghostly shapes of men and horses. The batman flung open the small door which led into the coal yard, and dragged his victim out upon the wet stones. He removed the handkerchief which hung like a scarf about the swollen neck, and then laid him as close as possible to the foot of the tallest coal pile.

With the puttering care of his kind the old fellow had made a wall of the larger



pieces of coal which acted as a sort of bulkhead and held up the towering pile. Piece by piece the batman removed a length of retaining wall and the coal above slipped and, like a small avalanche, poured down upon the old man and covered him from head to foot.

For another five minutes the batman worked, heaping the fuel above his victim, and then hastened back into the office, for it was coming time when he should be back in the clink after exercise period. He closed the door, picked up his basket of coal, and, bracing his shoulders, opened that door which led out into the Field Artillery Square. On second thought, he did not close it behind him; he left it open, so that any one looking into the dingy, cozy little bunk with its snappy fire and the simmering herring would think that the occupant of it had stepped out for a moment to get a bowl of tea from the dining hall.

The men were still in the stables, and officers and sergeants stood in groups in the center of the square. The batman knew the risk that an unemployed man underwent when he showed himself during stable hours.

Two routes lay open to him—one straight across the square, past the idling officers, to the big arched gate; and the other lay along the sides of the square under the galleries and past the stable doors. There he would be running into bombardiers and corporals who would be especially zealous since they in turn were under the eyes of the sergeants in the square.

But all in all it appeared safer, for there might be a visiting officer from the Horse in the middle of the square, and whoever he met under the gallery would understand the contraband character of his load and might pass him along without a word.

He began to walk slowly down the long line. A corporal bounced out of a door, peered at him for a moment, and snarled: "'Oo are you?"

The batman turned, walked back, and thrust out a shoulder so that the other could see the brass letters there. "I'm in the 'Orse," he said.

And the corporal answered bitterly as he looked into the basket: "Scrounging coal,

'ey? Strike me, if the gunners in the 'Orse don't live better than the generals in the field!"

But he let him pass, and the batman continued his slow progress. More than one N. C. O. glared at him and glanced nervously at the officers in the square. The batman expected at any moment to hear a voice sing out: "Corporal, what is that man doing there? Ask his name and number."

But he got past the first battery without mishap, and just beyond the white line that marked the division between batteries he turned off and slanted toward the arch.

"Scutt!" said a voice; and the batman whirled to see the other dark skinned soldier who had told him tales of shooting officers. The man stood almost within reach of him.

"'Op off!" said the batman in a low voice. He turned and began to walk again, but the cold sweat rolled down his spine, and it seemed as if all Woolwich must be staring at his back. He turned at the sound of footsteps; the other was following him, and the batman could see that he was calculating what profit there might be in betrayal. The batman turned and walked back.

"'Op off!" he said. "You 'ear?? If you peach on me, I'll peach on you! You killed an officer in France. You'd 'ang for it! As you were, you blawsted Judas!"

For half a minute the batman's blood-shot eyes glared into the paling face of the other. Then the man quailed and stepped away.

"Righto, old chum. I'm wishing you luck."

"Keep your trap closed then."

The batman walked on through the gate and into the main east and west axis of the garrison, a cobbled lane, walled on each side by barracks buildings pierced at every fifty feet by a narrow door leading to the upper rooms. On one end was Woolwich Common; on the other the road leading to London and to Blackheath.

For a moment the batman hesitated as to which way he should turn; there was a guard on each gate, and it would be a half hour yet before those off duty could go in



and out at will. A wagon passed him, loaded with forage and headed toward the gate opening on the London road.

The driver was alone on the seat, but the tailboard was down, and the batman, setting his basket of coal inside the first entry he saw, swung in and sat down on a sack of feed. He made no attempt to hide himself, for if he had, and if the guard on the gate should see him, he would be hauled out, questioned, and the game would be up.

So he lounged against the side of the wagon, taking his chance. The sentry knew the driver, who raised his whip in salute, unconscious that he was carrying a passenger. The batman nodded too, as if he were a member of a fatigue party going out to deliver feed at the remount station.

The sentry gave him a doubtful look, but let him pass, and once outside the gate and well away from the garden the batman let himself down and turned toward the Red Lion.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



## KITCHEN NIGHTS

HE has a sitting room at home,  
A parlor and a den  
With all the modern comforts there  
To please the best of men—  
Easy chairs and soft divans  
And bric-à-brac about;  
But he hits it for the kitchen  
When the family is out.

He likes to sit before the stove  
In a creaking rocking chair,  
Light up an old clay pipe he owns  
And puff away for fair,  
Then as he smokes to stroke the cat  
And rock and rock and rock  
As she keeps purring to the tick  
Of his old Thomas clock.

The folks would throw conniption fits  
If they should ever guess  
His evenings by the kitchen fire  
Brought him happiness;  
But just before they're all due back  
He sees the cat is fed,  
Turns out the lights, shakes down the fire,  
And saunters off to bed.

Not often does he find the chance  
To dream his dreams content  
And make believe that he's back home  
Where boyhood days were spent;  
'Tis seldom he is left alone  
But don't you ever doubt—  
He hits it for the kitchen  
When the family is out.

Percy W. Reynolds.





# Borrowed Plumes

By JOHN D. SWAIN

Author of "So This Is Wedlock," "The Owl Man," etc.

**A NOVELETTE—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE**

ON a bench in the Jardin des Tuileries, in whose bland precincts as momentous events have happened as in any garden of history save possibly that of Eden, two men sat talking earnestly. They had met casually through the time-honored preliminary of a borrowed match, but their conversation had gradually taken a momentous turn.

The elder, a cosmopolite of a possible thirty years, was in morning coat, lavender gloves and cravat, Austrian velour hat, and snakewood walking stick, a fine and untamed specimen of the true boulevardier. He had a little pointed beard, and a monocle dangled by its black silk ribbon. The other was unquestionably an American youth of good family, frank, ingenuous, and in the hands of his chance acquaintance at least ten years younger than his real age, which was somewhere in the early twenties.

He was lean, broad-shouldered, clear eyed, and dressed with the sort of careless smartness which is characteristic of our college lads.

"And so here I am," he was saying, a rueful smile on his lips. "In Paris, 'the Queen of the World,' with fifty dollars a month to do just whatever I please with! Like a chap sitting in the lobby of the Ritz, with a quarter in his pocket."

Without in the least seeming to do so, the elder had led George Strong on to talk about himself. To be sure, this was not an insuperable task. All his brief and care-free life long, young George had been making damaging confessions to chance listeners. It wasn't conceit. Nor were there any dark secrets in his past to lighten the corners of club lounges and smoking cars. It was in reality a sort of honesty carried to excess.

Like his mighty namesake, George could not tell a lie; but unlike him, he seemed possessed to advertise all his little youthful indiscretions. On this, his first day in Paris, and without a solitary friend in the vast city of pleasure and culture and of mighty, unseen forces beneath its smiling surface, he had fallen into agreeable converse with a highly sophisticated gentleman possessing the gift of the sympathetic ear; and he was spilling himself generously, prattling away like a schoolboy.

"You see, Monsieur Sangrado, it's all really my own fault. Dad is a sort of human machine. I'm not criticizing him, sir; he's been a corking father, given me ten times what I deserved. But what I mean is, he's all wrapped up in his business."

The elder man half closed his eyes, puffing lazily upon a thin black cheroot.

"I've heard of him, naturally," he lied. "But I somehow had the impression that he was a professional gentleman."

"Oh, no! Dad never even went to college. What we in the good old U. S. A. call a self-made man. Began life by cleaning out the office with a broom, and winds up by cleaning out the street with an interlocking directorate. Owns half a dozen mines and railroads and trust companies, and some other trifles he has probably forgotten. And naturally, he wanted me to start from the ground up when I graduated, and sit in directors' meetings when I got big enough so my feet would touch the floor, and scoop up whatever industrials and things he hasn't had time to go after."

The other nodded. "Naturally," he said. "To 'carry on,' as the British say. Help him establish a sort of financial dynasty."

"Yes, sir. That's the idea exactly. But somehow, I don't know why, I always detested business. Rather be lined up against a wall and shot than lined up against a swivel chair at a desk all cluttered up with push buttons and telephones and dictographs and things. Never could even keep my own expense account. Had a good allowance, but was always out of money and telegraphing frantically for more. We chaps in college were always borrowing and lending."

"But that is merely the history of all sons of rich fathers the world over! Can't really see why the governor should cut you off with a measly ten quid per month just for having your little fling?"

"I'm getting to that. It wasn't what I spent—used to lecture me, of course, and all that, but never got really sore about it. It was the last and silliest of all the stunts I pulled that got his goat. You see, at college, I was pretty good with the gloves. Boxing, you know. And when I won the Intercollegiate Heavy title, I sort of swelled up and burst. Thought I was in line to make Dempsey an ex-champ. So, without telling the governor anything about it, I sneaked down to New York and got booked for a try-out in the professional ranks. Had it all figured out that I'd surprise dad by coming home with more money for half an hour's work than he'd pay me for six months' hard labor as an office hound. You know, the pugs earn 'most as much as the big picture stars."

"I'm afraid that you're going to tell me you lost," the stranger hazarded.

George smiled dolefully.

"You've said it! Worse than that, I only lasted a little less than three rounds against a set-up I could break into little pieces with my bare hands. But he had been in the game too long. Made me a laughing stock. Pretended he was almost out in the last frame, groggy, you know, and when I went in wide open to finish him, he uncorked an uppercut that lifted me so high I didn't really get back to earth till next morning. But that isn't the worst. I'm always going into things like a fool kid, without figuring out the consequences. Ought to have known that all the free advertising I got before the fight wasn't on account of my amateur record, but as the son of George Strong, Sr. Papers played it up big. 'Son of Wall Street magnate makes debut in prize ring.' All that sort of rot. And you should have seen the panning I got in the press the morning after! And the funny cartoons. Only, my lips hurt so I couldn't smile."

"And *monsieur*, your father proved unsympathetic, I take it?"

"Well, he took it in a funny way. Sur-



prised me, I'll say! As nearly as I can remember his exact words, he said: 'The man I have respect for is he who gets what he goes after. I've been too hard working a man to follow sport, and naturally I had other ambitions for my son than to see him a common prizefighter. But I would have stood for that if you'd shown that you could fight! I'd rather have my boy a successful pugilist than a business failure. There's no room in the Strong household for anybody who deliberately chooses his career and then lasts exactly eight minutes in it.'

"But — pardon me — your mother, did she not intercede?"

George shook his head.

"We're alone, dad and I. I've no mother, nor any brothers and sisters. Nobody to take my part. And I didn't deserve to have, either!"

A little silence fell. Distractingly pretty *bonnes* passed, towing chic little boys and girls with dolls and beribboned hoops. A savage looking old gentleman with imperial and bell-crowned hat, and wearing clothes that roused memories of Louis Philippe, marched past as if he were a parade. A seedy looking chap in corduroys strolled by ostentatiously bearing an unframed canvas beneath one arm. From the distant boulevards came to them in a softened growl the eternal voice of Paris, scarcely interfering with the shrill chirp of sparrows.

The boy colored slightly.

"I don't know why I've inflicted all this on you," he deprecated. "Anyhow, that's all there is. Dad compromised on fifty a month, and instructed an old bookkeeper who looked like a horseshoe crab, and was about as garrulous, to send it to me any place I wished. I resigned from all my clubs—dad was fine about my bills. Squared 'em all up. Fifty, in my country, won't keep a fellow at a dairy lunch, even if he sleeps on a park bench. I crossed over here—sold some of my clothes and books and things for the passage money. Just arrived, with no address yet, but some idea of digging into the sort of attic where such chaps as the one with the big canvas who just passed, hang out. I can get quite a flock of francs for fifty dollars, and this

morning I had a breakfast for forty cents that I couldn't get back home for two dollars."

The stranger, roused from his seeming lethargy, looked searchingly into the clean, honest eyes of his chance acquaintance, and smiled kindly. Or rather, from long practice, he underwent certain facial contortions that closely registered kindness.

"My dear chap, I have been both flattered and entertained! No apologies, I beg. Furthermore, and by a curious chance, I think I am in a way to better your condition."

For the first time a flash of suspicion crossed George's face. He drew slightly away. "Really—" he began.

"Don't misunderstand me! I am perfectly selfish about the idea. You shall, if you agree, give more than you accept. Pray, in your turn, allow me a little of your valuable time. I, too, have a story to tell."

He lighted a fresh cheroot after offering the case to his companion. When it was drawing as well as it could ever be expected to, he settled himself comfortably, gloved hands resting upon the top of his walking stick, and began in a soothing, well modulated voice, and in a precise English whose accent left his nationality in doubt:

"I will be as frank as you have been, in the full assurance that you will respect my confidence, as I shall yours. To begin with, I have the honor to be the private secretary of—of one whom I will call a *personage*. I am in fidelity bound not to reveal his identity, further than to state that he is about to pay his first visit to Paris, and that he is coming incognito, using one of his numerous minor titles. This, you understand, is often done, and from blameless motives. Otherwise the visit would degenerate into a mere round of tiresome functions, exactly the sort of thing he is running away from. Under his real identity he would be obliged to offer to and receive from the French government all sort of tedious amenities. Furthermore, the old aristocracy of the Faubourg Saint-Germain would drag him out to their mildewed palaces, to dine beneath the ancestral chandeliers and sacred portraits, waited on by tottering butlers and simpered on

by equally tottering duennas. Am I making myself clear?"

"I think I get you, sir. The—the personage wants to be let alone. To see a little of Paris life."

The secretary lifted a courteously deprecating hand.

"But only in a highly respectable manner, I assure you. This is an escape—but not an escapade! The Comte de Vaudreuil—by which name he will be known—will be free to go and come undisturbed by journalists, official welcomes, formal dinners. And it happens that you are quite like him in appearance. Not that you could possibly be mistaken, one for the other, by even a casual acquaintance; but that *monsieur le comte* is, in fact, not known at all here, nor are you; and as you are about of an age, and of an equally admirable physique, the truth is that were he to assert himself to be Monsieur Strong, or were you on the contrary to present the card of Count Vaudreuil, there isn't one chance in ten thousand that any one would question you, or him."

A startled look crept into George's eyes as the trend of the secretary's idea dawned upon him. The other caught the look, and hurried on.

"In short, *mon ami*, the personage for whom I am solicitous is such rather from his connection with a much greater personage, than from his own connection with international affairs. He is the son of a younger brother of one whose name I must not mention, but who is one of the six greatest living monarchs of Europe. This is as far as I am in honor permitted to go. He lives quietly upon a pension from this exalted one, in his castle in a small village whose name would mean nothing to you. He is obliged to appear at court from time to time, and of course in his native village he is a little less than god, but not much. So that his appearance, and for the first time, in Paris, would be noticed only were he to use his true title and then merely because of his relationship with the great one. He arrives to-morrow, accompanied by his *valet de chambre*. I have already booked him at a quiet but luxurious little hotel on the Champs Élysées as Count

Vaudreuil. And not until good fortune threw me into your delightful company did any better plan suggest itself to me."

He ceased speaking until two gendarmes had loitered past, and he had disposed of an old woman selling flowers by tossing her a franc.

"Even as my master is coming to Paris for new experiences, why should you not enjoy some? Would it not be amusing for an American to be, for a few days, a real *comte*? Sauerbarten, the valet, would be in charge of you and his skill and experience will guard you against any possible misadventure. I shall remain with my master. All your expenses at the hotel will be paid. *Two francs for breakfast*? I assure you, *monsieur*, that you shall eat two hundred francs' worth if your appetite is so good. A carriage will be at your disposal at all times. The finest wines, the choicest cigars, you have but to sign for. You will have, not a miserable attic in the *Quartier*, but the best suite I could obtain at the hotel. Exotic flowers will grace your table each morn. Theater tickets may be obtained at the hotel bureau, and charged to your bill. In short, you will live *en prince*, and, having the *comte's* official sanction, you will be doing so without dishonor."

"And meanwhile the count—"

"Will, naturally, be M. George Strong, free as air and unhampered by espionage of any sort. He will do nothing to bring disrepute upon your name, and naturally you will be equally discreet; for while as Count Vaudreuil it is true that he would be to a certain extent incognito, it is of course a fact that his identity would be known to the astute police, who would probably have an agent looking out for him. He would be known unofficially to the government. And it is probable that, *sub rosa*, his presence would be known to the journalists. So that any—er—escapade, such as an appearance in the prize ring, or—I pray your pardon—worst of all, an affair with a woman, would bring veiled innuendoes that 'a certain exalted personage known as the C. de V.' had been seen to do this, or that, in the company of so-and-so. But I am an experienced reader of men, *mon ami*; and I behold in you one whom vice has not been



able to ensnare. You have my fullest confidence that, as Count Vaudreuil, your conduct will bring honor to an already honored name!"

The flattery expressed in word and tone banished from George Strong's mind the fact that comparatively little had been said of the plans of the *personage*. He blushed, hated himself for doing so, tried to speak, stammered.

"D-dash it all, sir, you're on! It will be a lark. And as we are both strangers here, nobody need ever know."

The private secretary rose, lifted his hat, bowed and extended a lavender-gloved hand.

"It is of an intelligence I should have expected, *monsieur*," he said. "There remains but a single detail—yet an important one."

He hesitated, anxious to choose the right phrasing for a matter of some delicacy. He recognized in the young American one who was as truly a man of breeding and family as those who claim noble blood, and he was solicitous not to offend him.

"In the matter of expenses, as I have indicated, there will be no reasonable limit. But even so, there are certain items that cannot well be reckoned upon one's hotel bill without embarrassment. The count would wish you to feel as unhampered as he is himself; and this bespeaks a certain amount of pocket money—I do not suggest it in the form of a salary, but as a proper part of our agreement that—"

George interrupted, his face flushing. It was well enough, as a harmless escapade, to change identities with the count for a brief time; but under no circumstances would he permit himself to incur even the suspicion of becoming anything like a gentlemanly mendicant! Europe was full of such. Men who accepted gratuities which they did not really earn in any manly way, and whose origin was thinly disguised by various euphonious terms. The prank, as such, appealed to him; he felt besides a sympathy with the unknown young nobleman who wished, naturally enough, to throw off the shackles of convention and disport himself as freely as any American.

"No money," he firmly negated. "I

must in order to carry out my impersonation adopt a rather luxurious style of living. But it must not extend to anything like an allowance! That is final."

The secretary bowed, respectful comprehension showing in his eyes.

"Then let us repair to a café and bind our bargain with a sirop! After which I will have the honor to escort you to the Hotel of the Three Queens, where you may consider yourself already to be a guest. The name of your hotel, by the way, is derived from the fact that three ex-queens have as a matter of fact, retired to it to spend their declining years. Each of them died there, and was accorded a magnificent funeral."

"Well, here's hoping Count Vaudreuil has everything but the funeral," George grinned.

## II.

FIVE days had passed since George Strong had entered the Hotel of the Three Queens as Count Vaudreuil. He occupied an ornate suite on the entresol, overlooking the Champ Élysées, an apartment which had sheltered famous princes of state, church, and finance. In its great canopied bed several world figures had passed away; a fact which impressed without especially cheering him.

It had at first been great fun. A certain deference had always been paid to him as the son and heir of his father, and he was enough of a good American to dislike it. But this was different. To begin with, it was only play acting. For a little while he was to taste the vicarious satisfaction of royal lineage. It would be an experience to remember all through life. And that was that!

It was an occasion, merely to be served by the incomparable Sauerbraten, his borrowed valet. It has been said that there are three sexes: men, women, and valets. Sauerbraten knew all tongues, all that there was to know about clothes, food, social usage, transportation, interior decoration, what was going on that gentlemen should not miss. There was in his manner toward George nothing that he could detect to show that the valet regarded him as other

than a real nobleman. Nothing to indicate that Sauerbraten was serving with his tongue in his cheek, and a realization that it was all part of a game.

He was always present when needed. If George so much as thought of a match, there was Sauerbraten at his elbow with a lighted vesta. If it suddenly occurred to him that a cooling drink wouldn't be half bad, the valet was whispering: "A lemon squash, sir?" But when not needed, he seemed to vanish into thin air, as if he customarily dwelt in some sort of fourth dimension, invisible but all seeing.

Considering the notable entries on the hotel register, the addition of a mere count meant little to the management; yet George received a studied deference from everybody connected with the establishment that was curiously piquant to an American boy. Even the millionaires from Argentina who stopped here did not receive quite the same genuflections, the same reverently hushed inquiries as to their pleasure in the matter of lumps of sugar for their coffee.

Sangrado, the secretary, dropped in every day. He took his master's mail back with him to the apartment he was enjoying in the Latin Quarter. He, too, was in his manner everything that could be desired. He always inquired if everything possible were being done for George's comfort. He suggested little excursions that might appeal to one visiting Paris for the first time. He was helpful in many little, unobtrusive ways. And yet George had the feeling that he was under the closest espionage. It wasn't easy to prove this, even to himself; but somehow he felt that Sangrado knew where he was, and with whom, most of the time. He did not think that he was being followed. Nothing so crude as that. But the valet, each evening, was solicitous as to his plans, that he might obtain tickets, or instruct the driver of the taxi as to destination. And Sangrado was certain to inquire as to whether he had passed an enjoyable evening.

In truth, George had nothing to conceal. He was genuinely interested in the relics of old Paris, its museums and galleries, its palaces and show places. It delighted him to ride about its kaleidoscopic streets by

day, to attend the opera or one of the theaters at night. It was a sensation when, on presenting the card of Count Vaudreuil, attendants at the Louvre or the Cluny, or the verger of some aged church would make haste to extend to him certain little privileges withheld from the public. Galleries not supposed to be open on the day he called; some moldering bone of a saint kept under lock and key from the profane gaze; these became visible upon the presentation of one of his magic cards.

Not that Sauerbraten dealt these cards out to him with a prodigal hand. Instead, he would deferentially inquire as to the number, if any, he would be likely to need this afternoon or evening? It was evident that it was not intended that the visiting cards of Monsieur le comte de Vaudreuil should be broadcast about Paris, to fall into unworthy hands!

There were occasions, when without Sauerbraten George would have been at a loss. The first was when he received an invitation to dine with an ancient royalist family of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. He was panic stricken until his valet assured him that it was only necessary that he, Sauerbraten, bear the properly worded declination, together with the prescribed number of pasteboards, to the house. There were left for him, three or four times, the cards of notable ones; but again the valet informed him that nothing more was required than a scrupulous return of the proper number of his own.

And at the end of five days, George became bored. He had amused himself by ordering all sorts of rich and expensive dishes, trying to find those that were out of season. He had eaten peaches from Algiers, worth almost their weight in silver; little white mushrooms under glass served with priceless old sherry; asparagus, each stalk as valuable as a stickpin; ducks, squeezed of their juices in a silver press; tripe cooked in a way that made it costlier than canvas backs. It had been fun to order huge tin boxes of cigarettes made in Cairo exclusively for the nobility, and thriftily resold by its scions. To smoke one of the big, fat cigars which the hotel kept especially for the Prince of Wales,



who had once stopped at the Three Queens, and had asked for this brand. But on the fifth day of his borrowed plumage, George awoke with a homesick desire for ham and eggs and a stack of wheats, and an unreasonable hatred for Sauerbraten because he knew that he would be lurking about with the bath at just the right temperature, and the cravat he expected George to wear lying starkly upon the fresh shirt.

From pure contrariness, he refused to bathe until he had had his coffee and *croissant*. He knew this would pain Sauerbraten. And, untidily lounging in his bathrobe, he glanced over the morning journals. He read French easily, and spoke it passably. But he merely skimmed through the papers, because they contained no news that especially interested him, and were full of gossip concerning folk that he did not know nor want to know. It was, therefore, with intense surprise and something of a shock that he came across his own name in the *Petit Parisien*. To be sure, it was tucked away rather inconspicuously on an inside sheet; but its contents were sufficiently startling.

With Gallic wit, and more innuendo than detail, there was described a jazzy sort of party given by "Georges Strong, the latest of the tribe of engaging young American millionaires who flatter our city by their preference." The party took place in the young man's studio on the Street of the Broken Jug. There were many ladies present, young and lovely. They wore charming smiles, all of them. A few had more elaborate toilettes. Several notable characters of the *rive gauche* graced the occasion, and the entertainment comprised innovations which were startling even to the blasé Quarter.

A queer feeling attacked George's stomach. It was weird enough to be reading of a wild party given by himself, yet at which he was not present. But it was the possibilities of this newspaper story that roused his deeper emotions. It was true that he was unknown in Paris; but as he planned to stay here for some time to come, this story would do him little good as a future citizen. If nothing worse it would give him a reputation as a prodigal spend-

er, which was an awkward asset for a man obliged to exist on a pittance of fifty dollars a month! And even his existence as Count Vaudreuil, with every item charged on his hotel bill, was proving a strain on his slender pocket funds, for as a nobleman he was expected to bestow tips in excess of the commoner, and while he was deferring his hotel fees in the expectation that the real count would assume them on the termination of their little arrangement, the attendants at galleries where he presented his card for special privileges, largesses to program distributors at theaters, flower girls, trifles of charity wheedled from him by the army of expert panhandlers and beggars, all were slowly devouring his precious dollars. And the first of the month, bringing a new fifty to him at the express office on the Rue Scribe to which his mail came, was still afar off.

For the first time he was irritable with Sauerbraten, an attitude which that astute servitor made note of without appearing to do so. It portended something that it was his duty to analyze.

With the arrival of the debonair Sangrado, the storm broke.

"See here," George brusquely began, causing the suave secretary to raise expressive eyebrows. "Look at this damned story in the *Petit Parisien*! What the devil does the count mean by dragging my name into notoriety this way! Can't he have a good time without making so damned much noise about it that it gets into the newspapers? I haven't so much as chucked a pretty chambermaid under the chin; but he seems to have pried the lid off that joint of his in the artist colony!"

Sangrado waved deprecatory, lavender-gloved hands.

"But, *monsieur*! Of a surety, you in your country know to what unreasonable lengths the press can go at times! And of how small a molehill they can construct the huge mountain—*hein*? I, Sangrado, assure you that the party was quite conventional. As harmless as an afternoon tea in a convent."

George snorted.

"Rot! Reads like it, don't it? Girls wearing pleasant smiles, and stunts pulled

off that even jolted the old-timers in the Latin Quarter. I tell you, I won't stand for it! I'll call the bargain off, and resume my own name while there are a few shreds of respectability clinging to it!"

Sangrado needed his utmost diplomacy to restore harmony. He assured George that pressure should be brought to bear upon the editor of the *Petit Parisien*. That, while nothing improper took place at the party, still those given in the future should be even quieter, more discreet. The guest list more carefully scrutinized. The admirable propriety of conduct observed by M. Strong had earned the profound gratitude of Count Vaudreuil, who would, ere departing, express in person his appreciation and esteem.

Meanwhile—was everything possible being done for the comfort of *monsieur*? Might he, Sangrado, suggest that the fountains, "*les grands eaux*," were displaying at Versailles on the morrow, and that a journey out might be enjoyable to one who had never beheld this prodigality of the Louis? With, let us say, a basket luncheon put up by the hotel chef. A brace of cold woodcock, truffled; a bottle of the 1897 Rheims—had *monsieur* tried this vintage? The Three Queens was indeed fortunate to have a few bottles left in its cellars. Famous *bon vivants* had come here expressly to obtain one, and been refused. But as Count Vaudreuil, M. Strong would have no difficulty whatsoever. And so forth, and so on. George was helpless in the hands of a man like Sangrado.

Nevertheless, he began from that hour to look forward to the time when the real count would be fed up on Paris, and ready to return to his little castle in the little village. Even though he, George, must then leave a palatial suite for a bare attic, and turn from a bed in which exiled monarchs had died, to a lumpy couch and cotton sheets. But at least he would be free! He began to feel like a royal prisoner. He could sympathize with the "personage's" desire to get away from it all. A lifetime of it must be horrible beyond description!

A few mornings later, he was horrified to read, this time in *L'Oeuvre*, the breakfast paper of Paris, and in the *Herald*—

where it looked much worse, in English—references to another big party pulled off by "Georges Strong," a party reputed to have lasted three whole days and nights, and to which, near the end, numerous uninvited guests seemed to have come, raising such a din that the tolerant police were at last obliged to remonstrate with the host, by that time too far gone to argue. The guests were shooed out, and "Strong" left to obtain a little much needed sleep, while his Japanese valet, Ugichi, cleaned the place up.

On this day, Sangrado for the first time did not put in an appearance. He surmised—which was in fact true—that George could not keep his temper at boiling point longer than one day. By the next morning, though still sore, he was able to see the humorous side of the affair. Here was he, living an almost austere life, doing all sorts of improving things at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Pantheon and the Invalides, cherishing frugally the few dollars, all he possessed in the world, while on paper he was playing the Millionaire Kid to a lot of rowdy models and near-poets and night rounders!

Dash it all, he had only been in a cabaret a couple of times, and then he hadn't so much as bought a drink for one of the flash women who hang out there! Serve the count right if he began to cut up a little himself, and start some rumors about the House of Vaudreuil.

He was too decent to attempt anything of the sort, however; but he did decide that he was a bit fed up with churches and monuments and such, and that he would begin to do the more obvious things that tourists do: Montmartre, the dancing casinos, the all night places catering to the morbidly curious. Trouble was, these places all cost real money, and he couldn't figure any way of having them charged up on his hotel bill. Clever stunt that smooth Sangrado had put over, come to think of it! Sounded all right, when he outlined it; but as it had turned out, the count was having all the fun, while he, George, was sleeping in a bed worth a couple of Rolls-Royces, eating and drinking too much highly seasoned stuff, and for



amusement nosing around musty archives and masterpieces, or, at best, taking in a show!

### III.

It was on the following afternoon that George had his first adventure, though it hardly deserved the name. He was strolling aimlessly about that section of Paris known as the Marais—a quarter once aristocratic, now given over largely to artisans. In the Place des Vosges, pathetically lovely with its crumbling old mansions full of historic ghosts of a great age, he paused before a little delicatessen shop oddly and somewhat impudently wedged in between a palace once occupied by a cardinal and another which had housed a king's mistress.

There stood on the street itself, just beyond the curb, a perambulator with its hood drawn down as a shade against the warm afternoon sun. Past it whizzed taxis, shaving its fragility by inches. Fiacres lumbered by, imperiling its tiny occupant. George looked about for the nurse, or parent; but saw nobody save the usual passers-by, who either ignored the perambulator or glanced incuriously at it and went on.

To George, fond of children and all helpless things, it seemed an outrage that any one could have abandoned an infant to such possibilities of disaster, even making due allowance for the uncanny skill of the Parisian *cocher* and chauffeur. He seized the handles firmly and lifted the baby carriage onto the sidewalk, wheeling it carefully round so that it would interfere as little as possible with foot traffic. As he did so, a Parisian lounging by—a big man with the ink-black, spade-shaped beard only Parisians can, or would, achieve—grinned broadly, shrugged, and moved on. George was half inclined to follow and seize that odious beard, and waggle the impudent head upon its broadcloth shoulders; then he, too, shrugged, and thought: "What's the use?"

The spade-bearded one was in fact banished from his mind at this instant when from the little delicatessen shop there emerged, like a hornet, a most personable young thing, clad severely yet fetchingly in black and white, with little patent leath-

er shoes strapped with white buck, stockings of black silk bearing each a white embroidered butterfly, but bareheaded, her abundant soft black hair loosely caught up with a huge amber comb.

Violently, explosively, in an idiom George had difficulty in following, she demanded to know what it was that he dared to do with her perambulator, in the sacred name of a cabbage?

When she paused to breathe he replied mildly:

"But, *madame*, the baby! It stood out in the street, and I saw two cabs actually graze it. I was merely replacing it in a safe position."

The vivacious one regarded him from eyes that seemed to him the size of No. 1 prunes, and of about the same color, though fortunately more brilliant. Then she burst into laughter that was sheer music.

Reaching forward, she lifted the hood. Where George had visioned a sleeping baby there reposed a large bologna sausage! The girl now placed beside it a little flat basket filled with salad vegetables, a dish of tiny pickled herring, a thin flagon of olive oil, a string of garlic. Then she snapped the hood down again, and regarded George eloquently.

"*V'la, monsieur!*" she challenged.

George laughed. It was good to hear him, because he never laughed unless really amused. He was too honest to feign mirth. Then, too, his teeth were unusually good, his whole appearance that of a nice, wholesome boy. So the little unknown joined him willingly enough; and when he suggested that as a penalty for his stupidity he be permitted to wheel her unique delivery cart to her home she readily assented.

Thus it was that a most domestic scene enacted itself in the serenely quiet old Marais.

"*Monsieur, maman et bebe,*" quoted the girl from the title of a notable little volume.

Winding in and out of queer, crooked old streets leading off the Place des Vosges, George paying no attention to their direction, they came at length to a tall, thin sort of house whose entrance was through a fascinating brick tunnel and so into a

cobbled court wherein plantain trees thrived in green tubs and many children played.

At one of several doorways inside, the girl paused, and informed George that here, up three flights, was her home. And she added a suggestion that, since he had been so good as to wheel her groceries for her, he condescend to partake of them in her studio.

"Studio! So, then, *mademoiselle* is an artist? And what do you compose? Landscapes? Sonnets? Songs?"

"Among other things, *monsieur*, I compose an excellent salad! Will you deign to try one?"

George deigned. He dragged the perambulator into the hallway, and then lifted out the various packages and bore them up the successive flights of stone steps. Presently he stood in a big, rather bare room, which contained some wonderful old tables and chairs, a modern and very uncomfortable looking divan, a worn rug or two, a few etchings—signed—tacked onto the walls, an immense black cat sleeping on a cushion, and little else.

"*Attendez, monsieur!* Have the goodness to be seated, and I will return in a jiffy."

In a surprisingly short time, and before he had had opportunity to examine the unusually clever etchings, the small person reappeared in a doorway and announced that the salad was "composed."

The room in which they sat down to eat was not much bigger than a clothes closet. There was just room for a table, four chairs, and an odd little buffet. It was papered in a warm red, and lighted by candles. The furniture was of black Flemish oak, and there were on the walls two nocturnes in oil. A charming little nook, George thought, as he seated himself.

"And now, I introduce myself. Mme. Volontiers, at the service of Monsieur—"

"Le Comte de Vaudreuil," George supplemented, bowing over his plate.

If he had thought to create any excitement in little Mme. Volontier's breast, he was mistaken. She nodded brightly, and set to work to serve the salad. To be sure, thought George, in Paris a mere count is of no more import than one more mite in

a large cheese. And anyhow, he would have much preferred to make himself known under his own name.

The salad was good to look at, delicious to eat. The garlic was merely hinted at, the red wine vinegar just sufficient to mitigate the blandness of the golden oil. A few tiny slices of peeled tomato added a touch of color. The lettuce broke crisply. Then there were little white rolls with fresh butter, a bottle of homely, honest white wine, a morsel of Brie cheese, and afterward coffee, and a liqueur served from a droll, pot-bellied flask, and surprisingly good cigarettes from a silver box bearing a coronet.

All the time *madame* talked vivaciously, and about herself. But she found time to learn that her host was paying his first visit to Paris; that he was stopping at the Three Queens, which caused her to raise shoulders, eyebrows and hands, and to cry, "Oo, la-la!" and also—which she plainly disbelieved—that he knew not one single woman, although he had been here for *quinze jours*—a fortnight. And she was properly shocked to learn that he had yet to visit the Dead Cat, the Little Hell, or any of its sister cabarets. She promised to take his education in hand.

An hour later, when he had left, he wondered angrily why he had not kissed her. She was kissable enough, as she stood saying good-by, her provocative little face upturned, eyes half closed, on tiptoe in pretended effort to make herself as tall as he. But, stupidly, he had merely scribbled her address on a card, and left one of his own—or, rather, one of Count Vaudreuil's, which he did in part to get even with him—and departed. Up to a certain point, George wasn't at all shy with women; it was easy for him to meet them, and all that. But at critical moments a cursed shyness overcame him.

Two hours later, raging up and down his drawing-room, he forgot all about little Mme. Volontiers. For, awaiting him, was a cable. It was from his father, and read:

Disgraceful orgies reprinted in local papers.  
Allowance stopped. Shall pay no bills.

It was well for the sleek Sangrado that he was not present when the now distracted



George read this devastating cable. Sauerbraten discreetly retired to his fourth dimensional refuge and was not to be found. The priceless arras which draped the walls shook to the thunder of George's maledictions upon Sangrado, his master, and himself. The Sèvres vases upon the mantel shivered in all their porcelain arteries.

When he had worn out the first transports of his despair, his native American sense, what little he had, returned to him; and he rang for a servant, called for blanks, and sent to his father a return cable, charging it to his hotel account:

All mistake. Stranger to me, same name.  
Living perfectly quiet life. Letter follows.  
Please reconsider. GEORGE.

But his nerves were far too shaken to attempt at this time a letter on any subject. He remembered Sangrado's recommendation of the 1897 Rheims, and rang for the *sommelier* to ice a quart and fetch it. Then, lighting one of the fat, oily cigars fancied by His Highness the Prince of Wales, he sat down, elevated his feet to the table top *à la Américain*, and gave himself up to melancholy forebodings.

The following morn brought Sangrado, in a state of great agitation. Before George could train his loaded battery upon him, the secretary beat him to it. He thrust almost into his face a copy of *La Voix Parisienne*, the journal of society, and hissed: "*Monsieur*, have you then by any chance read this? *Sacré maudit!* A thousand thunders! You have at last ruined my noble master!"

Mechanically, George accepted the journal, and beheld a heavily underscored paragraph in the column devoted to the deeds and misdeeds of notable visitors.

The *Comte de V*—, who is housed at the Three Queens, was yesterday observed wheeling a perambulator in the company of a most charming young woman, on the Place des Vosges. It was a scene of almost rustic simplicity, eloquent of the democratic spirit of our amiable young visitor.

A glad song rose in George's heart, and was with difficulty restrained from bursting from his lips. At last he had begun to square matters with the man who was the cause of all his troubles! He managed to

keep his face straight as he turned to Sangrado.

"My dear fellow, bear to the count my profound regrets! These cursed journals! They spare no one. But in justice to myself, let me tell you the facts."

Rapidly he outlined the blameless incident. It was impossible to tell, from his hearer's expression, whether he believed him or not. At the statement that the perambulator bore, not a baby, but a large bologna sausage, Sangrado swallowed convulsively, and plowed both hands wildly through his glossy locks.

"In any case, *monsieur*," he commented simply, "the beans are overturned, as you say in your delightful idiom. Nothing more terrible could have been foreseen. A hundred parties, a *liaison* even, were less fatal! I greatly fear your unfortunate *contretemps* will force his highness to shorten his vacation."

"*I hope it does*," George fervently breathed; but to Sangrado he merely said: "I can only trust that my discreet manner of life during the past fortnight may in some measure atone for this stupidity."

Soon after, Sangrado left, his pessimism unassuaged.

"That spade-bearded bird must have been a reporter, if they have reporters over here," mused George. "I seem to recall having noticed him once or twice before. Probably been detailed to follow me up. Well, he's had a dull time of it, up to now! This paragraph will probably get him a raise in pay."

#### IV.

THERE ensued two days of ominous calm; the sort that prevails before a typhoon, or a Kansas cyclone. Sangrado called as usual, but made no further references to the affair of the perambulator. Sauerbraten emerged from his fourth dimension, as impersonally assiduous as ever. George wrote his father a full account of his curious bargain, and its calamitous results. He also wrote two letters to Mme. Volontiers, but tore them both up. He walked once as far as the Place des Vosges, then returned without going on to her lodgings. His shrinking funds did not permit

him the luxury of accompanying her to the Dead Cat, or any other malodorous resort, and he didn't quite have the nerve to invite her to dine at his hotel.

He fretted inwardly, slept poorly, and generally marked time. He longed to have Count Vaudreuil leave Paris and permit himself to resume his own name, and at the same time dreaded to have him do so. At the Three Queens he at least had every conceivable necessity and luxury. The average man would have been content to let things ride indefinitely.

But fate was not thinking of letting things ride. Abruptly, and rather horribly, she intervened and took matters out of the hands of both conspirators.

It was the third morning after the appearance of the paragraph which had so upset Sangrado. George, having breakfasted, was despondently scanning the morning journals to see if there were any more personals of interest to him. He had dressed for the street, but lacked ambition to go anywhere. His funds were exhausted, anyhow. He couldn't so much as buy a flower for his buttonhole, although some expensive and rather hideous orchids stood in a Chinese vase upon his table. He could order deviled kidneys and plovers' eggs here, but once outside could not have bought a bowl of bouillon. He had everything but money.

The thought occurred to him that he would like to smoke; and as usual, before he had made so much as a gesture toward the big tin of Egyptians, the infallible Sauerbraten was at his side, a lighted vesta in hand. And at this instant there came a knocking at his door—as portentous as the knocking at the portals in "Macbeth." Sauerbraten answered it.

A hotel attendant extended a silver tray on which reposed a visiting card. The valet handed it to George, who read:

**MADAME LA COMTESSE DE VAUDREUIL**

"*Hell's bells!*" yelled George. "Ain't we got fun?"

The servant had remained persistently in the doorway. He now spoke up, bowing profoundly.

"*Madame* insists upon being shown immediately to the apartments of Monsieur le comte," he announced. "She is even now in the lift."

In panic, George turned to Sauerbraten; but for once that paragon was speechless. His face was still expressionless, but it was of a greenish-white color, and his throat worked convulsively. And so it was, with George still sprawling in his chair, his cigarette untouched, there came a light footfall, the servant disappeared, and was replaced by a quite ravishing picture.

The young woman who swept breezily into the room, her two hands outstretched, was slender and blond, and clad in an old gold and blue traveling gown topped by a smart toque that said Rue de la Paix as plainly as if endowed with speech. Three steps into the room, and the door having closed softly behind her, the lady came to an abrupt pause, her blue eyes widening incredibly, her rosy lips still parted over little white teeth.

"Why—you—you *are not my husband!*" she gasped.

George rose, as one using another's legs. His throat was chalk dry. He bowed shakily.

"Not to you, *madame*," he said simply.

"And pray, to whom are you my husband?" she demanded, rather ridiculously. "What are you doing here—and where is Edouard?"

The perfidious valet was stealing away, inch by inch. An imperious gesture detained him.

"Sauerbraten, answer me! Who is this—this *gentleman*? Where is your master?"

"I beg you to be seated while I explain," George hastened to intervene. "I assure you that all is well. Your husband—the count—is in the best of health and—er—spirits."

He shoved forward a chair, and after a brief hesitation the countess seated herself rather primly.

"Had we known of your coming, Count Vaudreuil would of course have been here to greet you, *madame*. I very much regret



that you should be disturbed by finding a stranger in place of him."

"I came unannounced for an excellent reason," the lady rejoined. "I started at once upon reading that scurrilous paragraph in *La Voix Parisienne*!"

George's equanimity began to return. Things might be much worse. The arrival of the countess—of whose existence he had not been aware—certainly complicated matters, for the count at least; but he, George, could easily smooth over the affair of the perambulator, and that by simply telling the truth. He felt himself on safe ground.

"I am deeply humiliated," he began, "to have to confess that the unfortunate paragraph was due entirely to me. But first, let me explain that as a sort of—er—prank, I am for a few days enjoying the prestige of your honored name. I am an American—an utter stranger in Paris. So the chance of discovery is negligible. It amused your husband to remain entirely incognito while here; and so, I have been assuming his status. Thus, as you can readily understand, he has been spared the nuisance of social exactions, or the unwelcome attentions of reporters. Meanwhile, I beg you to believe that I have conducted myself in the most discreet manner, spending most of my time at the museums, churches, historical monuments, and theaters. Sauerbraten knows this. He has obtained my tickets of admission."

Both looked at the valet, who, his aplomb recovered, bowed and murmured, "Quite so, *monsieur*."

"Unfortunately," continued George, "three days ago I noticed a perambulator standing precariously in the street. Its hood was drawn, and I naturally supposed it held an infant. So, as there was no nurse about, I lifted it from its dangerous position back on to the pavement. At this instant its owner, a young woman, rushed out from a little shop where she had been making purchases, and demanded of me what I was doing? And I explained, and—I can only plead that I am young and unmarried, *madame*, and the day warm and alluring, and that the young woman was very pretty. In short, I wheeled her car-

riage home for her. That is all. I have never seen her since."

The countess sniffed. "All?" She inquired. "How, then, does this charming idyl come to be associated with Edouard's name?"

"Because, *madame*, I have been using the name of Count Vaudreuil, and even his visiting cards. Those were my instructions. Naturally, I must stick to one personality at a time. It was inevitable that the young woman and I should introduce ourselves. I gave the only name I was at liberty to use at the moment."

"Even so, you should never have passed out his name to a chance woman of the street! You admit you have never seen her since. The amenities would have been satisfied had you given her any name at all! Now the court circles will be buzzing with the scandal. My Edouard, wheeling a nameless creature's brat openly through the streets of Paris! I—"

George, in his eagerness ventured to interrupt a lady of quality.

"But there was no baby! She uses the perambulator for her little shopping tours. To be exact, it contained a large bologna sausage, some pickled herring, and—"

He paused in alarm at the stricken look that came over the countess's face. The color flooded it until she was a deep carmine, and she gasped for air.

"Oh!" she almost shrieked. "*Mon Dieu!* This is frightful beyond words of mine! A sausage—my Edouard, ruined for life by a b-bologna sausage! *Monsieur*, have you then no sense of proportion? A baby would have been bad enough, but understandable. Men in all ages have been known to feel solicitude for the progeny of other women than their wives; I should have been disconsolate, but not utterly shamed. But what will happen when it becomes noised about that Edouard trundled another woman's *sausage* through the public streets? *Monsieur*, it is I who assure you the ribald mockery of the masses will rock thrones when this becomes known. You have imperiled a dynasty!"

George cowered in his chair before this hysterical outburst. He feebly tried to stem the tide.

"But it was I, not your husband, who so disgraced himself. And I shall take steps to publish the truth, that he—and you—may be cleared. I don't at all mind the ridicule!"

The lady calmed a little, drying her eyes with a scrap of lawn.

"This is at least generous, *monsieur*, and I thank you. But who are you? I do not know your name."

"It will mean nothing to you, *madame*. I am a stranger, and of no importance. George Strong, very much at your service."

Again the lady's eyes widened.

"George Strong? But then you are that terrible man who has been giving such—such risqué parties in the Latin Quarter—"

A curious look came into her eyes. She leaned forward, almost confidentially, and asked in a quieter voice: "And by the way, under what *nom de plume* has Monsieur le comete been concealing himself?"

Panic seized George. He beheld his splendid defense tumbling about his ears. For, while he had exculpated the count so far as the perambulator episode went, it was but to mire him all the deeper when his wife learned that, as George Strong, he had won notoriety in a quarter which is not easily surprised. From every pore, it seemed to him, a little jet of cold perspiration shot.

"In all justice to the count," he managed to say, "I must let him answer that question. In truth, I never have so much as seen him. The affair was arranged by his secretary, M. Sangrado."

"A-ah! It sounds like that slippery, plausible scoundrel! Sauerbraten"—turning suddenly to that motionless figure—"do you know where to find your master?"

"Not precisely, *madame la comtesse*; but I dare say it can be managed."

George rose.

"Let me go along with him," he urged. "Two heads are better than one!"

The countess raised an imperative little hand.

"*Nenni*, M. Strong! I insist that you remain with me. Once you two men get your heads together, Satan himself could not disentangle the threads of the story you will cook up. Sauerbraten, in one hour

—or less—you will be here with your master. Do you understand?"

Sauerbraten bowed, and murmured. In another moment he was gone.

The conversation that ensued was desultory. The countess asked a few questions, but they were innocently subtle. The garrulous George as usual spoke freely of himself. Although he did not know it, in a very short time the little lady had his card-index number in life, and had in her heart almost entirely exculpated him. She even liked him. People nearly always liked George. It would have amazed him to know how perfectly she had matched together the broken bits of information she extracted.

Here was a green boy, frank, likable, whose harmless pranks had enraged a stern, wealthy parent. He becomes a remittance man, and at once, upon his arrival in Paris, falls into the hands of the oily Sangrado, who molds him to his odious purposes. The natural vanity of a *bourgeois* youth is tickled with the thought of playing the prince for a while. Meantime her Edouard, whom she knows like a book, adopts the name of the lad, and safely entrenched behind it, as he fondly believes, plunges into a life that as a world figure he could not have enjoyed. And but for the ridiculous affair of the perambulator, Sangrado's stratagem might well have succeeded, and the count would have returned to her with his escapades unsuspected!

Having completed her picture, she rapidly outlined her campaign. She would not, she decided, tax her husband with anything but the unwelcome publicity brought upon their name by the perambulator incident. She did not propose to engage in a domestic quarrel before a mere commoner—even though he was a nice boy, with a wonderful physique, and such unspoiled eyes and lips. How strong he must be—in reality, as in name! For a fleeting instant she speculated as to how it would feel to be caught up in his arms, and, with a start she checked herself. These were not the reflections proper to a wronged wife! She wrenched her attention back to what George was saying.

"*Madame*, after your journey—won't



you—may I offer you a glass of wine? They have a remarkable champagne here. Rheims, 1897. You see, you won't be accepting anything from a stranger; from me. For everything is charged to the count. May I ring for the *sommelier*?"

She nodded, her eyes shining.

"I am sure it will be quite proper to drink a glass of Edouard's wine," she admitted. "And I *am* a bit seedy."

She drew from a platinum and sharkskin vanity case a little flat box, and from it a gold-tipped cigarette bearing a coronet. George hastened to supply a lighted match. So that, when well within the stipulated hour a dejected knock announced the arrival of the captured Edouard, he was rather surprised to behold a scene that might be described as mildly convivial.

It was Sangrado who performed the necessary introductions, after Edouard had ceremoniously but without enthusiasm kissed his wife's hand; and then, Sauerbraten having retired, the four sat down in conference.

It was a short conference, as far as George was concerned; but not too short to suit him. He looked with some interest at the man with whom he had exchanged names, and beheld one slenderer than himself, but of about his age and coloring. Unlike George, who was the replica of health and vitality, Count Vaudreuil seemed to be suffering from insufficient sleep, and his eyes had a swollen appearance. He gave the impression of a weakly amiable character.

It was the little countess who took charge of the proceedings from the outset, and acted as self-appointed chairwoman.

"You needn't explain, Edouard," she began as the count opened his lips, in reality to make some perfunctory inquiries as to her health and welfare. "M. Strong has told me all that is necessary at this time; that for reasons considered good by M. Sangrado, he assumed your name and title, while you buried yourself in the Latin Quarter as George Strong. I assume that you do not dispute him?"

"What's the use?" The count sighed. "The cat seems to be out of the bag, but—"

George interrupted nervously.

"Madame la comtesse did not quite understand me! I did say that I was masquerading as Count Vaudreuil, but I did not mention the name that he himself was using in—"

The countess lifted a slim hand to impose silence.

"It really doesn't matter, since Edouard himself has told us," she said sweetly, a malicious gleam in her frosty blue eyes. "The real task before us is to terminate this irregular arrangement as soon as possible. I have engaged a private car at the Gare du Nord at six o'clock sharp. These apartments can be given up immediately, as well as the bohemian quarters on the *rive gauche*. Sauerbraten will attend to the luggage, of course. M. Sangrado will immediately settle the reckoning. Perhaps M. Strong will honor us with his presence at luncheon?"

The count spoke up agitatedly.

"But, my dear, it is most inconvenient to get away at such very short notice! In fact, I have a—a quite important engagement for this very evening. To-morrow, as early as you like—"

"To-day. At six o'clock," reiterated the countess. "The arrangements are made. No doubt M. Strong will gladly undertake to entertain the party you have arranged for this evening, under his true name!"

"But it isn't a party at all! Quite a particular affair," protested the count."

"*Cabinet particulier*, no doubt," dryly commented his wife. "A little party of two. Well, the capable Sangrado will pen a most correct note of apology. Meanwhile, time flies."

It was evident to the somewhat bewildered George that whatever may be the American conception of the status of European women, in this particular family the lady was the tiger. Her manner admitted of no compromises, and she brushed objections aside as if they were not there.

"I may as well say," the count gloomily remarked, "that I was obliged to take a three months' lease of the studio. And to pay for it in advance. Also, that I bought the furnishings for it from the second-hand shops in the Quarter. Sangrado said it was more profitable to do this and then have an

auction, than to rent. There is a stock of wines and tobaccos there, too. Not to mention Ugichi, a Jap I hired, and who is paid a week ahead."

"All these appurtenances belong rightly to M. Strong," the countess briskly decided. "They are in his name, and are a slight recompense indeed for the odium you have brought upon him by newspaper notoriety. M. Sangrado, please call Sauerbraten in and command him to take M. Strong's belongings to the studio, and to pack up and carry monsieur le comte's to the Gare du Nord. That settles everything, I believe? Good. And, now, as to luncheon with us?"

She turned with a charming smile to George. Having, as usual, carried everything before her in a single charge, she was now feeling quite amiable. Later on, in their private car, she would have much to say to Edouard; much, indeed. But for the nonce, she was the delightful hostess.

But George had no stomach for a family luncheon with the De Vaudreuils. He was very uncomfortable, and wanted to get away. He had not been consulted at all as to the disposition of his luggage, nor his willingness to go to live in the late quarters of his namesake; the countess had swept him along as easily as she had Edouard and his Machiavellian secretary. Besides, where on earth could he have his things sent, save there? Where else, save in the Bois, could he sleep?

As in a dream, he beheld himself upon his feet and making his adieus. He shook hands with the countess, and noted how warm her palm was, how friendly her clasp; and with the count, observing that his hand was cold and clammy. He bowed formally to Sangrado, and took from Sauerbraten his walking stick, gloves and hat, together with a card bearing his new address. A moment later he passed for the last time through the severely aristocratic portals of the Three Queens, and received, as a nobleman, the salaam of the *portier*.

A few blocks down the Champs Élysées he paused uncertainly, and thrust an exploratory hand into his trouser pockets. His total funds consisted of a fifty centime piece; worth, once upon a time at normal exchange, ten cents. His allowance had

been cut off. He was leaseholder of a presumably cozy studio apartment, whose wines and cigars had been selected by a connoisseur. He even had—for a week at least—the services of a Japanese house boy. But as for eating—well, fifty centimes will buy a bowl of nourishing broth, and two crackers, together with a large onion, if one is willing to patronize the brasseries!

Already, though he had petulantly refused the omelette with goose livers and truffles suggested by Sauerbraten for breakfast, he was getting hungry. It was probably psychological; induced by the reflection that he couldn't buy any more dinners.

Dejectedly, he set his face toward the Place de la Concorde on his long walk to the Street of the Broken Jug.

## V.

GEORGE loitered, in no hurry to get to his new domicile. Had he possessed even the slender means to put up at the meanest of *pensions*, he would have preferred it to the studio, whose ill repute was, though unjustly, connected with his own name, and where he doubted not he would be called upon to answer many awkward queries.

He crossed by the Pont de la Concorde, turned down the Boulevard St. Germain, and so into the Rue Bonaparte, coming at length to the old Church of St. Sulpice, about which clusters a little nest of crooked streets, one of the narrowest and most picturesque of which is that of the Broken Jug.

Many people were going and coming through the tunnels and courtyards and arched entrances; butcher boys whistling as they sauntered along, a joint or a basket of vegetables balanced on their heads, hands thrust into loose smocks; models, flitting across from one studio to another, with only a gaudy mantle draped about their slim figures, stockingless feet thrust into slippers, cigarettes between their lips; an old organ grinder with a hungry looking monkey disconsolately climbing a drain pipe to peer into the studios of impoverished futurist painters; students and sculptors in baggy corduroys and flopping hats, or no hats at all; pessimistic bill collectors; the usual citizenry of the Latin Quarter.



After several inquiries he found the entrance to his own apartment, speaking loosely, and timidly asked the concierge, old Papa Poussin, to direct him to it. Without removing his pipe, he gave the floor number.

"I am George Strong," the new occupant stated defiantly, thinking it as well to get matters straightened out. But the announcement had no appreciable effect on the concierge. Old Papa Poussin had lived too many years in the Quarter to feel surprised at anything any more. He regarded all the denizens as mad, with the exception of himself and a very few cronies with whom he gathered whenever he could in one of the little brasseries of the neighborhood. He merely grunted, and murmured: "*Bien, m'sieu'!*"

Sauerbraten, the efficient, had perchance advised him that a change of owners impended in the studio apartment; more likely, he didn't care one way or another. He closed his eyes, and George began to mount long flights of worn wooden stairs. On the fifth, and top floor, he found his door, bearing a plain card with his name tacked to the panels. He sounded the brass knocker, and waited.

Almost at once the door opened and he beheld a Japanese boy bowing gravely and incuriously.

"I'm George Strong," the tenant repeated for the second time within a minute; and waited for the effect of the words upon the late Count Vaudreuil's house servant.

The Japanese bowed again, no sign of intelligence on his broad, flat face.

"Yess, sar!" he answered with a curiously soft hissing inflection; and stood aside for George to enter.

The door opened directly into the main, or studio room of the apartment, a large one, with an overhead and northerly exposed skylight, and two windows overlooking the courtyard. Piled neatly in a corner, he beheld his own kit bags, containing his wardrobe. His eyes wandered back to the attentive Japanese.

George smiled. It has been mentioned that he had a singularly frank and engaging smile; but if it penetrated the secretive shell of the Oriental, there was nothing to indicate it. His beady eyes were fixed upon

George's, his body was motionless, an immobility broken only by the faintest rising and falling of his thick chest.

"You are Ugichi? Yes; I supposed so. Well, Ugichi, I suppose you know that this will be my home for a while, and that the other—the George Strong who was here before me, has gone away?"

Ugichi bowed again, but without speaking.

"May as well tell you the truth, old man," George continued. He plunged a hand into his trouser pocket and fished up the fifty centime piece.

"This is all the money I have in the world. Fact! And so you see that I can't very well afford a helper round these diggings. Have to do my own dusting and sweeping. As for cooking, there won't be any till I get some money somewhere."

Again his face broke into a boyish grin.

Ugichi gazed hard upon him for a long minute. Then, "Pretty soon, I stay!" he decided. Which George decided to be Nipponese idiom for the announcement that he would stick around for the present.

George thrust out his hand.

"Stay as long as you like!" he urged. "But as my guest, not my servant. Stay until you find yourself a new place."

Ugichi did not seem to see the proffered hand; but, closing his fists and pressing the knuckles together in salute, he for the third time, and still more profoundly, bowed.

In this informal manner George set up housekeeping.

First of all, he examined with some curiosity his new quarters. The big studio room had a decent wooden floor, good enough for dancing, and various scratches and the remains of a waxed surface indicated that it had been used thus. There were half a dozen pretty fair rugs on it, though old and mended, but good in tone. Upon the walls hung a dozen crude sketches in oil, a couple of dry-point etchings, a cubist watercolor, some pencil sketches of Paris as seen from attic windows, a big Indian shawl with figures of absurd elephants and improbable fowls woven in gold thread upon it; odds and ends picked up, he thought, by the count or by Sangrado

at some secondhand shop, or bought from some of the scores of artists thereabout.

The furniture was of the same jumbled character. Three big divans, two of them of worn Spanish leather, one of faded brocade; chairs aplenty, no two alike, and ranging from the ornate seat once used by the dean of a cathedral, down to a three-legged milking stool from Belgium; small tables bearing hubble-bubble pipes, copper coffee sets, cloisonné cigarette boxes, candlesticks. Things which could easily be hauled against the walls, leaving a clear space for dancing, George thought.

Three doors led from this main room. The first gave into a small but rather elegant bedchamber, with a full set of nearly new Circassian walnut. This had evidently been Count Vaudreuil's sleeping room. The second opened into a little cabinet that George had known in America as a "den." It held a few books and, in a large cabinet, many bottles. He ran his eye over them, and in the light of his recent experience at the Three Queens realized that he was the owner of an exceedingly choice "cellar." A sort of roof-cellar, so to say. There were also several hundred important looking cigars, and a stack of imported and domestic cigarettes. A fireplace, a couple of intriguing easy chairs, and paneled walls made this a cozy sort of place; and a broad, low couch before the one small window rendered it available as a spare bedroom.

The last door gave into a well furnished kitchenette, and here George found Ugichi pottering with a tea service.

"May I come in?" George asked pleasantly before crossing the threshold.

Ugichi bowed nobly. "It is yours," he said.

"Ours," George corrected him. "May I join you in a cup of tea? And"—a bit anxiously—"you don't happen to have anything to eat?"

There appeared to be everything in the way of conveniences and comforts in this little room with its electric stove, shining pans and pots, cabinet of dishes and cutlery, enamel sink and all, excepting food. Ugichi indicated a few tins of English biscuits, part of an unpleasant looking cheese, and some cans of evaporated milk. These,

with sugar, spices and one lemon, comprised the larder. George sighed, and retired to the little den.

He speculated upon how long one might manage to exist upon liquors and cigars. At least, he could sell some of them! The thrifty tradespeople would gouge him horribly, of course. He knew nothing of values. A curious streak of acumen, an inheritance from his father most likely, made him hate to sell good wine 'way below what Vaudreuil had paid for it. Possibly a better way would be to exchange it directly for food. He wondered if he could be arrested for selling the stuff without a license! He had heard, somewhere, that it was almost a capital crime in France to deal in tobacco without a permit. He would have to ask Ugichi.

The boy appeared at this instant. He never seemed to make any noise walking about, although he wore European shoes, and indeed dressed as an Occidental, save that when indoors he put on a gorgeous robe brodered with gold and crimson dragons. He set the tea service upon the table and started to withdraw.

"Here!" George called out. "Wait! I want you to have tea with me. To tell the truth, I'm lonesome. Want to talk with somebody. Ask some questions, too."

Ugichi bowed, and poured into two exquisitely thin porcelain bowls the boiling water that caused to unroll, luxuriously like a cat's paws, the long, thin leaves he had placed in the dry cups. He covered them with their saucers, and waited for the tea to draw. Meanwhile George rummaged about and found a bottle of very old, dry Amontillado. Always in training, he had scarcely tasted liquor at all until he came to Paris, save for an occasional glass of beer. Nor had he smoked, save sparingly, in intervals of training or during vacations. Now he poured out two glasses of the aromatic sherry, and opened a fresh box of Egyptians.

Ugichi had squatted upon a little rug, and produced a long bamboo pipe into whose tiny copper bowl he put a pinch of Japanese tobacco horribly scented with some rank perfume. He gravely refused the sherry, but brought out from the folds



of his robe a little china flask of *saki*, a rice wine that tastes something like salt water and alcohol, only worse. Then he lifted the covers from the tea, and the two bowed formally and drank, George stuffing himself with biscuits to appease an appetite that by now had become really annoying.

They didn't talk much. George suggested to Ugichi the possibility of exchanging some of the wine for food, and Ugichi considered this feasible. He learned with relief that no party had been planned by Count Vaudreuil for that night. And Ugichi told him a little about the customs of the neighborhood, the fees the concierge and charwoman expected, and so forth.

When their simple afternoon tea was done, Ugichi rose. George, a student of the human body, marveled at the way in which the Jap seemed to rise all in one piece, as if uncoiling, and without a wasted effort. He stood now, by George's elbow, and from the girdle of his robe produced a large sheet of paper covered with Ugichi's ideas of English script. This he tendered to George.

"Telumphone message," he announced, "Till now, I forget."

Unreadable as he found the beady black eyes, George had somehow the instinctive feeling that Ugichi had not forgotten at all; that his was not the type of mind to forget anything whatever. But he merely nodded, took the message, and read it with some difficulty.

It proved to be from Mme. Volontiers, of all people in the world! And she briefly announced to M. George Strong that she would be at the Café of the Hard-Boiled Egg, at a given number on the Boul' Mich, at five o'clock.

Instantly the exuberance of youth drove from George's lean, powerful body all thought of hunger. The room seemed suddenly to be flooded with sunshine, of an intensity not to be found in America. Little Mme. Volontiers had been his one social contact in all the dreary days and weeks since he had been in Paris. His daily chats with Sangrado had not lessened the formality of the secretary's manner, nor brought them even remotely within the bounds of sociability, Sauerbraten was

merely an unusually well functioning machine. With Count Vaudreuil he had spent less than an hour; and his tête-à-tête with the engaging and highly executive countess had been most uncomfortable, though rather exciting. With Mme. Volontiers alone had he been able to relax, to laugh and play as with a good little comrade; and only his impecunious situation and the awkward contretemps of the perambulator had prevented him from looking her up again.

He was immensely bucked up by the realization that she remembered him, and was willing to make a rendezvous. He smiled at the name of the café she had chosen, reflecting that it was probably an echo of the days when the city was full of doughboys, after the armistice. He looked at his watch, and was depressed by the thought that he had still some two hours to wait before the hour she mentioned. He decided to go outside and wander about the Quarter. So, after tossing down another glass of sherry, and filling his case with cigarettes, he told Ugichi that he wouldn't be back till after dinner, and suggested that if he could barter a bottle of champagne for some food he was at liberty to do so. A couple of minutes later he was dropping down the five long flights, three steps at a time, in approved Quarter style, passing old Papa Poussin with a cheery wave of the hand.

He lost himself half a dozen times, strolled about the Luxembourg Gardens, gaped at the grim old Cluny Museum, found himself circling the buildings of a university that was celebrated long before George's continent had been discovered, peered inside fusty little shops where everything conceivable and inconceivable was on sale, amused himself studying the good natured throng of students, artists, and their hangers-on, observed staid matrons harranguing hucksters over the price of a bunch of radishes; seeing and hearing everything, yet conscious chiefly of his forthcoming interview.

It was not until it was time for him to turn his steps toward the Boul' Mich, that he was stricken with the curious fact that Mme. Volontiers had known where to telephone him, since he himself had not until

a few hours before, possibly at the very time the girl was phoning him, expected ever to see, much less dwell in the studio on the Street of the Broken Jug! The conclusion was inevitable, and overwhelming. It was not he at all whom she expected, but rather Count Vaudreuil, masquerading under his name. Probably Mme. Volontiers had attended some of his parties; come to know him well enough to make an appointment *a deux* at a Latin Quarter café.

The let-down was terrific. All the joy of the mellow afternoon passed from the sky, and from George's soul. And with this thought came another. Not only would the lady be disappointed when the opulent Vaudreuil failed to appear, but when his substitute turned up with one lone, sad dime in his clothes, what would become of the ornate little dinner she was anticipating?

If George had been a coward, he would have fled back to his studio. Then, when Mme. Volontiers called up to learn why she had been so outrageously treated, he would have told her that her George had unfortunately been yanked home by a capable and irresistible wife, to be replaced by another and totally inadequate namesake. But he could not bring himself to do this. He felt that it was up to him to appear in person, and make the explanation. Probably she would then recognize him as the man who had rescued her perambulator, and on parting had presented the card of M. le comte de Vaudreuil. This would in a measure verify the truth, as he would relate it.

Coupled with this courageous and manly attitude was a very urgent desire to see the little lady once more. He was more lonesome than ever since she had by her telephoned message revived her image in his mind. Perhaps she would not feel too badly about it, and might even console herself by accepting a little of George's society. But—hang it all! How could that be when he had but a fifty centime piece to his name? The situation was as distasteful as possible to a youth who had for years been accustomed to sign for whatever he wanted at half a dozen clubs of his own, and one or two of his father's. It was plain that poverty was a habit one had to accustom one's self to little by little.

Not therefore with the sparkling eye and buoyant tread of one going to a rendezvous with a charming girl, but rather with the subdued tramp of an elderly and disillusioned man, did he enter the undistinguished portals of the café over which hung, as a symbol, an enormous ostrich egg attached to a light chain.

It appeared that the interior offered little to the eye to set it apart from the usual type of the lower-priced restaurant, despite its unique title. There were, close by the door, the little fruit-piled counter back of which sat the *caissière*, and about three sides of the room dingy mirrors, in tarnished gold mounting, with imitation leather seats beneath, and a multitude of small, marble-topped tables. There were other tables, for four to eight, up and down the center of the room.

At this hour, the place was nearly empty. George at once identified Mme. Volontiers among the half dozen there, sitting alone, of course, and at the far end on the right. How demure she looked, and how marvelously she wore her simple clothes! National gift, he reflected, pausing a moment to drink her in ere she should look up and spy him. He compared her with the elaborately dolled-up girls he had left behind him, with their bobbed hair, bizarre chains, skirts frankly revealing dimpled knees as they sat, and sometimes even when they walked, their furs and expensive hats.

The almost severe black gown of Mme. Volontiers, her little toque, worn at just the right angle, a single pearl—imitation probably, since it was rather large—a glimpse of silken, high-arched insteps over little black suede shoes, would have been scorned, he thought, by a parlormaid back home; yet she wore it with superb verve, and an air of distinction. He was admiring the curve of her smooth, ivory white cheek, the arrogant little nose above generous lips, the mass of her blue-black hair and the eagle sweep of her brows over those odd, prune-purple eyes—ridiculous figure! Then, as if drawn by his regard, she looked up and saw him.

Before he had got halfway down the room he read the disappointment in her eyes. But with the disappointment was coupled no



surprise. He wondered why. An instant, and he held her warm little palm in his.

"Why, monsieur le comte! Who thought to see you here? It is a pleasure of the unexpected—*hein?*"

He seated himself uncomfortably.

"I—you see, I really am not Count Vaudreuil at all. I—"

Her odd eyes widened.

"But surely, *monsieur*, I have your card in my *portemonnaie*," she protested. "And I cannot have misunderstood so ancient and honorable a title."

George gulped miserably.

"It's about that I want to explain," he began. "You see, the real count—"

He looked up to note that she was laughing at him with her eyes. Impulsively, she placed a hand upon his, which rested upon the table top.

"I know all about it, *mon ami*," she soothed. "You see, I have known monsieur le comte for many years. And so, when that day you so importantly—oh, yes, it is I who assure you, *very importantly!*—presented the visiting card of my good friend, naturally I was curious."

"You didn't act surprised," ventured George, a little chagrined.

Mme. Volontiers laughed, a delicious, contralto rill of mirth.

"Act? To the contrary, *monsieur*, I acted so well that you did not know I was acting at all! Is it not so? I wished to see Count Vaudreuil himself, and learn the truth. Naturally, he told me all. I then felt certain that I had had the honor of meeting M. George Strong, who was quite properly acting out his own little part in the drama. But"—and her eyes shadowed as a summer cloud in an otherwise clear sky will momentarily shut off the sun—"I must admit that I telephoned for M. George Strong this day, but fully expected to meet Monsieur le comte de Vaudreuil. Is it by coincidence, then, that I have this so great pleasure? Or do you bear evil tidings? Has anything happened to—to Edouard?"

In his heart, and utterly without reason, George hated the count because he had known Mme. Volontiers so long. He behaved in consequence like a sullen boy.

"I suppose you met the count at one of

those parties that got me in Dutch?" he growled.

"But, no!" replied the little woman, after puzzling over George's idiom. They were speaking, half in French, half in English, piecing out one another's efforts. "I never go to one of le comte's so piquant parties. He would not have wish it. He regard me too highly! I tell you, we are friends from many years. Why, if you please, is he not here, since he is of a punctuality, and it is now past five?"

As well and as delicately as he could, George described the invasion of the imperative but wholly charming countess into their little game of borrowed plumes, the count's feeble protests, and his departure as a prisoner, on a private car.

"So," he concluded, "I am now living in the studio, under my own name, of course."

A waiter like a melancholy crow had for some time been hovering about their table, making all sorts of excuses by flicking imaginary specks of dust from cloths that were immaculate, rearranging napery in precisely the form it held before, and had held for decades according to the traditions of the house.

Mme. Volontiers shrugged.

"Perhaps it is better that we order, *monsieur*," she suggested. "Only thus shall we gain privacy."

The moment was one of the most horrible in George's life. For years it was to haunt him as the acme of embarrassment. How confess the ghastly\*truth? He blushed a brick red; a fine old Pompeiian red.

"I—fact is—you see, I've only just moved in, and in the hurry of changing my clothes I left my purse and all my money in the other coat, I know it's inexcusable—you—"

Mme. Volontiers laughed heartily.

"My dear M. Georges," she spoke kindly; "do not look as if your uncle had died and cut you from his will! It is a matter so simple to arrange. Me, I am well known here. I shall introduce you to the *caissière*, and you may sign for whatever you like, and for as long as you choose. My recommendation is sufficient."

She started to signal the waiter, when

George frantically seized her hand. Perspiration bedewed his face. This was a depth below which he hoped never to plunge.

His voice sank to a whisper.

"I may as well tell you the truth," he confided. "Look!"

He produced the sad, lonely fifty-centime piece.

"This is all the money I have in the world! True, I have an apartment—one of the best hereabout, I guess. I even have a lot of fancy wines and cigars, and a Japanese servant, for a week at least. But no money. You see, my father read in the American papers about the parties that were being given by George Strong, and so he cabled that he had cut off my allowance. Of course, I cabled back—used up all my money doing so—and have written; but so far, not a sou!"

Then the little woman did indeed laugh. Never before had George realized the genuine eloquence, the soul, the nuances, that can be conveyed by laughter. It was not boisterous, of course; it did not attract the attention of a single diner present, nor scarcely that of the hovering waiter. But it plunged George into a fiery furnace of self-consciousness and ignominy. She observed his woebegone look at last, and cut her mirth as short as if she had used manicure scissors.

"Do forgive stupid me!" she begged. "But it is so *fun-nee!* And all because of that naughty, naughty De Vaudreuil! While poor M. Georges, on his part, compromises the count with my innocent market cart, my babyless perambulator!"

In a second she was the capable woman of affairs. She waved aside all George's objections, rode over his protests with a fusillade of "*oo-la-la's.*" And in a twinkling, in a rapid patois which George could not follow, had sent the waiter off with the orders for dinner.

Looking suddenly up, George was astounded to see upon her face a look of despair which made its smooth contours seem almost haggard. It seemed to him that sheer terror flamed far back in those splendid eyes. She smiled, and he wondered if he had been mistaken.

"Please tell me more, *mon ami,*" she coaxed. "All about why you come to our Paris, and what you do with those gr-r-reat shoulders of yours, and everysing!"

Once more George, so willing to tell the story of his mishaps, plunged into the recital of his disastrous induction into the ranks of professional pugilism, the subsequent interview with his father, and his flight to a land where so small a sum as fifty a month will procure nourishment enough to keep both body and mind functioning.

He had told it so often, that by now Othello could hardly have bettered the epic. And, hanging intently upon every word, her little, high bred face leaning sympathetically across the table, her slim shoulders, eyebrows, hands, lips, even her tapping feet making eloquent comment from time to time, Mme. Volontiers listened as no Yankee girl has ever yet learned how to do.

To George, conscious of the flattery and sympathy of her attention, it seemed as if she gestured with every part of her body excepting her ears!

## VI.

THE *potage* arrived while George was yet in the midst of his story of that fatal night when his professional début had taken place in the ring. Upon a rich and odorous sea rode a little fleet of croustades, dipped in butter and anchovy paste, and delicately browned. George never appreciated the artistry of the little dinner. He partook of each course with the unabashed hunger of a healthy male, watched by the dancing and appreciative eyes of his hostess. There was a sole, with a wondrous sauce in which little oyster crabs slept in spiced white wine. There was chicken so tender that it appeared that it must have been raised on whipped cream. A cheap but sound wine was served; and Mme. Volontiers herself "fatigued" the salad of crisp lettuce and endive.

To do him justice, wrapped up though he was in the boyish zest of his life story, he did take note of the charm of her table manners, the unobtrusive gentleness of her



hands, the distinction with which she presided. He could scarcely have named what he had eaten. But he felt immensely bucked up when, over coffee and a wee cordial, she commented on his recital: "But then, *mon cher*, since you are skilled in *la boxe*, you shall make much money in Paris!"

George reminded her that his record did not justify such a conclusion.

"Ah! But American boxers have the *reclame* here. And it was a mees-take, that. You have learn by it. It shall not happen again."

George pondered this idea, recalling that the general run of French pugilists did not compare with even our second and third raters. Many a wornout old war horse had crossed the Atlantic to reap a hatful of francs in the Paris ring! He glanced up to speak further of this, and caught again the look of anguish in his companion's eyes.

"Tell me, *please!*" he urged. "You are distressed. Is—is it because Count Vaudreuil did not come? Can I help in any way?"

Mme. Volontiers hesitated, her fingers nervously tapping the little coffee spoon against its tiny cup. Suddenly she decided.

"I will be as frank as you have been, my friend," she said. "I will confess that when I learn that Count Vaudreuil has gone away, for a little I think I shall faint. It is to go far, far back in my life when I was a small, little girl in a convent in the Midi. And not so far away is a military school for noble young gentlemen. So, often we see them on Sundays, at mass in the old church of the village. And—sometimes—we manage at other times, through a crack in the wall as they say.

"When I am sixteen, a young lieutenant of the school, who is Monsieur le comte de Vaudreuil, falls in love with me. He is then seventeen. We make our promises. I have a little, so pretty ring; only, I dare not wear it on my finger, *comprenez?* So, it is always on a ribbon about my neck. But one day I have a *mal a la gorge*—a bad throat, with fever. They put me into the infirmary; and there the ring is dis-

covered. And, since it bears a family crest, the story is out of the bag! You know that Edouard is of a great family. I must not tell you more; but he is address as cousin by the King of Spain, and by three other monarchs; he can go in any court, even at the Vatican he is a noble.

"So this innocent little affair with poor me, it raise what you call a blizzard. In it I am freeze—froze, almost. For, rich in blood, Edouard is poor in purse. He belongs to the moneyless branch of his family. A council is called. I am lectured. I expect I am to be burn alive. Edouard is taken from military school, and sent home. And pretty soon he is married to a girl of the lesser nobility, but very, very rich. She whom you saw; madame la comtesse."

"Understand me, *mon cher*, I have no redress. No promise breach, as you call it. These marriages are all arrange; Edouard has no rights, I none. But because he is fine and honest, he insist upon them making me a little arrangement. So, it is settle that I have a sum of money—not large—put in bank for me. In Credit Lyonnais, to be exact. For I am penniless. My people were *bourgeois*; my father an *avocat* of Tours, who died, together with my mother, before I can remember them at all.

"I leave the convent, then, but not with the broken heart. We were only boy and girl. I think Edouard was in love with me, a little; but me, I was in love with love! And with the glamour of Edouard's so great name. I am easily console with my little fortune. I am a *rentière*; living on my own little income. It is not enough for fine clothes, and a big house; but I am happy in my studio in the Marais, with my fat black cat, and my little kitchen where I cook myself good things to eat, which I bring home in the baby carriage, as *mon-sieur* well knows.

"But always there is the serpent in the garden, not so? And the serpent with me is a lobster. My brother, the only one left of my family, is a great criminal; a *red-viste*, many times convicted. And because he has big, red hands and a *gros nez*, also red, his intimates call him *Langouste*; lob-

ster. His real name does not matter. Langouste tease me all the time for money. I give, a little. When he has made a good haul, and has money for himself, I do not see him. But one night he is caught in a church, stealing the sacred vessels; and then his *avocat* send for me that he has no money to pay his defense; and I refuse to help. For, *regardez, monsieur*; my brother is wicked; a blasphemer. Soon or late, he is sure to kill some one; and then he shall go to hell! It is better he be put where he can do no more wickedness. He is sent to Cayenne, and his last message to me is a curse so terrible that I dream about it many times.

"A few nights ago, when I come home, I find Langouste crouching by my door. He has escape two years ago from Cayenne, and finally has come back to Paris. He needs money. I refuse. He threaten. We have a terrible scene, and finally he strike me twice, and drive me out into the street, warning me if I tell the police he or one of his mob will kill me. I have only the clothes I wear, and my *portemonnaie*; not even my poor Djinn, my *chat noir*, will he permit me to take. I go to a tiny room near here, and to Count Vaudreuil I tell my trouble. For, attend, *monsieur*; my bank books are hidden there, and while Langouste cannot use them if he finds them, neither can I while he is there; not to speak of all my little possessions."

George opened his mouth to ask a question; but the voluble little lady was not to be interrupted.

"Wait! I shall tell you. I will not advise the *prefet* of the escape, for I surely shall be killed if I do. I dare not go back for my things, since Langouste is an animal, a beast who would make nothing of striking down his own mother, rest her soul! But Edouard, he propose to me that he shall take Ugichi this very night, and with me they will go to my house in the Marais, and stand guard while I take what I need—my bank books, my black cat, my clothes and what needs for my toilet, *n'est-ce-pas?* The rest, the chairs and tables and the stove, Langouste may keep until it pleases him to go away. And so, when you tell me that Madame la Comtesse has carry away

le *pauvre Edouard*, I am very much distract, me!"

George drew a deep breath. He had known for some time now, ever since the fish course at least, and he suspected that it dated back to the hour he first met her, that he was in love. And for some millions of years, the approved and satisfying manner in which the young male evinces his love for the female of his species is by going out and swatting something or somebody who annoys her.

He forgot his penniless condition. He wanted to offer up a little prayer of thanks for this opportunity. He glowed with gratitude toward the little countess for removing the philandering Edouard from the vicinity. He almost loved Mme. Volontiers's wicked brother!

"I don't see," he began quietly enough, "why I am not just as good a protector as Count Vaudreuil! What difference does it make, so long as you get back your things?"

The deep violet eyes widened.

"But, M. Georges, with Edouard it was different! We are old sweethearts. You, I have seen but twice. I have no claim upon you—"

"Nonsense! You have this claim on me; that you are the only friend I have in Paris. The only one I have had as hostess; twice, you will recall. And also—you are the most beautiful, glorious, dearest—"

He paused as Mme. Volontiers half rose, a warning look in her eyes.

"Is it that you, *monsieur*, would take advantage of my misfortunes to make violent love to me—"

He seized her hand, starting to speak.

"—In a public place, a *café*?" she concluded, settling back onto her seat as gracefully as a bird upon its nest.

"It must not be, *mon Georges*," she shook her head decidedly. "You must not be brought into this, my affair."

"Then I shall go all alone," he threatened. "Crash into the place, crown the 'lobster,' gather up all your stuff I can find and carry, and bring it back."

She laughed at his pugnacious mien.

"My George, I yield! See, it makes dark. You shall go and get Ugichi, and



we will start. I do not think Langouste would dare attract notice by starting a fight with you, because he doesn't want a *sergent de ville* running up to my studio to see what is the matter. Let us go, as you Americans engagingly say!"

He watched her settle the reckoning and tip the *garçon*, feeling most uncomfortable the while; and then they passed out onto the Boul' Mich, just coming to life with its evening throng. In ten minutes they were at the studio; and Mme. Volontiers waited in the courtyard while he raced up the five flights to his apartment.

He proposed to see the thing through on his own, without the dubious aid of Ugichi. The little Jap was Count Vaudreuil's servant; he had been at liberty to make whatever arrangements with him he chose. Doubtless he had promised him a liberal reward to tag along; but George had no right whatever to involve him in an adventure that might prove to be tame enough, and then again might not. And so, merely nodding to him as the door was opened, he hastened to change into his oldest suit, and to divest himself of his watch and stick-pin. He had no weapon of any sort, and wished for none.

"You go away, yess?" Ugichi sibilated.

"Yeah. Can't say when I'll be back. Just look after these thing, will you, Ugichi? That's a good chap. Must hurry along."

But Ugichi deferentially yet resolutely barred the way.

"It iss for Mme. Volontiers?" he asked.

"Why, yes," admitted George, recalling that Ugichi was probably more or less in possession of the facts. "Why?"

Ugichi bowed gravely. "Then I go, too," he stated simply.

"No! Not necessary at all. This is something I must see through myself. You mustn't get mixed up in it. There may be a ruckus; police and all that. Good-by!"

Ugichi stepped aside, and George darted through the door. But he had hardly passed, with the little lady, out of the cobbled yard, than the Japanese appeared at the doorway of the studio building, an inscrutable look in his eyes; and, like a shadow, he trailed along after them.

They walked swiftly down the Boule-

vard St. Germain, speaking rarely, hurrying across the Pont Sully, and, once on the right side, passing old St. Paul's. Turning up the Rue Birague, they presently came to the Place des Vosges; and then, by numerous short cuts that left George completely turned about, they suddenly found themselves before the yawning mouth of the courtyard which gave onto Mme. Volontiers's stairs.

The famous perambulator which George had trundled up the five long stone flights stood outside her door when they had gained it; and they paused a moment ere inserting her key. There came to them the sound of muffled voices from within.

"So! Langouste entertains!" the girl breathed in his ear; and the delicate perfume of her hair maddened George and flexed the muscles of his arms. He breathed deep, his big hands clenching automatically.

With no warning noise she turned the lock and threw open the door. Inside the big room, which was in great disorder, three men sat about a table on which stood a bottle of the forbidden absinthe. The air reeked with the stench of French tobacco.

George identified Langouste at once by his enormous red hands, which were in the act of dripping a generous portion of the green gold liquor through a little metal tripod set upon his tumbler, a tripod containing a perforated bowl with a lump of sugar in it. The other two were smaller than Langouste, types of the ratty, furtive, city bred crook the world over. Langouste was bareheaded; his two companions wore caps with long visors which half masked their features. All three froze into immobility at the entrance of Mme. Volontiers and her escort.

"Pardon the intrusion, *mon frère*; I have come to get a few clothes and some rouge and brushes, and above all my good Djinn. Where is he? Ah, there is *la pauvrete!*"

She ran across the room and from under a couch fished a demoralized and hungry looking black cat, who clung to her while turning scared eyes upon Langouste.

The Lobster had risen, and now stood, half a head taller than George, a powerful,

bony frame surmounted by a turniplike head with steady eyes the color of dirty dishwater.

"And *monsieur*?" he asked silkily. "To what do we owe the honor of his presence?"

"Who? *Georges*?" Mme. Volontiers laughed cheerily. "Oh, he is only a nice artist student who will help me carry my heavy bundles. You see, I have no money for a *fia*re, *mon frère*!"

"You have then seen fit to bring a strange man—a *mouche*, for all I know, a spy—to where your poor brother hides from the injustice of the world for a few days? You have done this to me?"

"*Fichtrel*!" mocked the girl. "Don't be a big cabbage! I have told you the truth. He is a stranger—an American student. He has never heard of you."

"Then," said Langouste ironically, "he has much to learn."

He motioned—with an eyebrow, it seemed to George—to one of his two companions, who instantly glided from his seat and crossed the room to take his place before the door, one hand thrust into the sash he wore, where doubtless a knife was hidden.

It was evident that little Mme. Volontiers was not going to be able to carry it off so nonchalantly as she had forlornly hoped. George smelled battle in the air. He kept his eyes upon the big man, his arms hanging loose at his sides, waiting for the first hostile move. Without shifting his gaze, he took in the salient features of the big room; noted here a rug that one might slip up on, there a heavy candlestick that might come in handy, how the light struck in from the grimy windows.

He hadn't expected the climax to come so suddenly.

Langouste was a good general, in his way. He didn't believe in wasting time in parleys. He had a definite purpose in making his sister's apartment his home for a few days, and that purpose had not been accomplished. The arrival of the girl was inconvenient; but her he could have kicked downstairs. The bringing in of a stranger angered and alarmed him. He signaled to the other man, and something happened.

George could not have said that he saw the cast whereby the little man, without rising from the table, drew and hurled a thick, broad bladed knife at him. He never could recall seeing the knife itself as it flickered, a sinister gray thing, straight for his throat. But the actions of a trained athlete are motivated, not by observation and reflection, culminating in decision, but are performed instinctively, and founded upon thousands of reiterated gestures stored up in the subconsciousness. The man who thinks first and hits afterward, will seldom hit more than air, or a blank wall. The trained fighter moves first, and later on may ponder on his reasons. So, George turned his head just enough to the right so that the knife nicked his ear, causing it to bleed, but not injuring him in the least. Then, in two leaps, he was on top of Langouste.

He always felt aggrieved that he could remember so little of what followed. He knew that it was grand, while it lasted, but somehow details were blurred. There was a soul-satisfying crunch when his flailing right caught Langouste just at the angle of the jaw, and he went smashing over the table, bringing it in ruin to the floor. There was a brisk bit of sparring with the little chap who had thrown the knife at him, culminating in a pretty uppercut which lifted him a foot in the air, and dropped him like a sack. There was a joyous smashing of wood, and glass, and china, and a banging of copper as a Turkish coffee set was raked from a mantel. And all the time Mme. Volontiers's thin, high screams formed an obligato that stimulated George as the bagpipes stimulate a regiment of Highlanders. No pistols were used; noise was the last thing Langouste and his ilk wanted, noise of the sort that would bring in the police.

The little chap on guard at the door now felt obliged to desert his post. Just as George straightened up after uppercutting his pal, the little one paused some six feet behind him, leaned back, threw wide his arms, and kicked upward in a vicious half circle well above his own head.

The world came to an end. From nadir to zenith the universe flamed crimson. The last trump split the monoliths of kings, and



the sun and moon were turned off as if short-circuited. George stood erect for an instant, and then seemed to telescope, joint by joint, member by member. That was all there was. There wasn't any more.

## VII.

UGICHI had followed at a discreet distance, unobserved, until George and his companion entered the door of the lodging in the Marais. He went no farther, but took up his post in a shadowy corner of the big courtyard. He was disappointed not to be in on the little party, as he would have been had Count Vaudreuil not been replaced by another, and he wished to be close by in case of an emergency. But his fine Oriental sense of courtesy prevented him from going farther than the door itself. From where he stood, he heard the diminuendo of ascending footsteps up the stone stairs, flight after flight; and after that, only the noises incidental to a great house occupied largely by the families of *ouvriers*, petty tradesmen, and one or two obscure artists, came to his keen ears.

The peace was broken abruptly by a sound as of splintering wood, followed in quick succession by other noises that told him a battle was raging somewhere above. He stiffened to an even closer attention; but still made no move to investigate. And since action is ever briefer than the recording of it can be, silence again closed down in a few seconds, and once more the querulous crying of a baby, the evening lecture of an artisan's wife to her fuddled husband, or a tinkling piano in some upper apartment dominated the night.

A very few minutes later a car glided up to the tunneled entrance to the courtyard; and shortly thereafter Ugichi caught the sound of slow and cautious steps descending the stone stairs. They moved with difficulty, and as they drew near were accompanied by whispered advice and the occasional striking of a match in a dark turning. Presently the doorway gave forth a group of three, bearing the form of a fourth, whom the Japanese recognized as George Strong. He sidled nearer, keeping in the shadow and hugging the wall. Experience

with dead bodies told him that George still lived; indeed, there were indications that he was "coming to."

The bearers themselves were feeling none too well; Langouste staggered with his share of the burden, the shoulders, and one of the two smaller men behaved like a sleep walker. Also, there was a steady dribble of blood from his swollen lips. Nevertheless, they managed to half carry, half drag the unconscious man across the courtyard, and to pile him into the waiting car. The two or three idlers who were about seemed to regard the affair as commonplace, the homegoing of an intoxicated friend assisted by Samaritans.

The car was not a taxi, but an old and rather battered limousine, with a big spare rim locked in its rack behind. Into this, as the gears were engaged and the car started along, Ugichi leaped monkeylike, curled up into a sort of ring within the spare.

In a surprisingly short time the car stopped, after making several turns about the narrow streets of the section; and the Japanese, leaping off and to the opposite side of the street, found shelter beneath a penthouse which extended from an ancient palace, now a warehouse. The three men once more took up their burden, now able to stand on his feet but plainly dazed and helpless, and all passed up three worn steps to a door in a darkened house directly opposite.

To their knock, the door was cautiously opened. Ugichi noted that a chain held it, and was not loosed until the men were recognized by the doorman. As soon as they had disappeared, and the door was closed, the Japanese crossed over and noted the number. He also carefully studied the houses on either side, and with a pocket knife scratched a little symbol on the door jamb. The house itself was a narrow, four story affair of brick, later in style than most of those in the Quarter. No sounds came from within; nor was any light visible until, on the very top floor, a dim glow as of a candle behind thick curtains, stole down into the dark and nearly deserted street.

Meanwhile, Mme. Volontiers, though shaken and terrified by the violent scene of which she had been a helpless witness,

showed the typical practicality of the French woman by wasting no time once she was left alone. Scarcely had George been hauled through the doorway, than she closed and locked the door after them, and began swiftly and methodically to stuff into two suit cases the best of her wardrobe, her toilet accessories, stray knickknacks, a book or two, a little clock.

Then, listening first at the locked door, she went to a window wherein stood a wooden box abloom with geraniums. Ruthlessly grubbing them up and pawing about in the earth, she retrieved a small oblong box. Even as she was wiping it clean of the damp loam, there sounded a knock at her door.

With one hand pressed against her heart, breath suspended, she listened. Wildly her eyes sought for a weapon; for anything that might be turned to the purposes of defense. Then a voice came to her through the keyhole; a sibilant tone, proclaiming that Ugichi awaited without.

An instant later she had admitted him, and was almost sobbing with relief. She erupted into questions concerning Ugichi's presence, whether he knew what had become of M. Georges, if he thought Langouste and his fellows would return. Ugichi waited stolidly until she had to draw breath.

"Him alive. Ugichi see house they take him. Will get, pretty soon. First we go!"

They went. With the little Jap bearing the two heavy suit cases, and Mme. Volontiers grotesquely swathed in two cloaks and a cape, with her little wooden box and her big black cat in her arms. It was a long and tiresome walk back to the Latin Quarter, but Mme. Volontiers did not wish to leave a trail by engaging a fiacre or taxi. Several times they paused to see if they were followed. Once Ugichi slipped into the shadow of a poplar tree while his companion walked on; but though he waited a long two minutes, no skulking figure appeared on their trail.

Without mishap, the little woman was delivered safe and sound at the room she occupied in a cul-de-sac off the Rue du Four, and Ugichi returned to his own quarters in the Street of the Broken Jug. He made

tea, produced from a pocket a piece of dried fish and a carton of cigarettes, and squatted down upon a rug to eat, smoke, and think. For a long time he sat with eyes closed, features as expressionless as a Buddha's. Then, as if his problem, whatever it was, had been solved, he rose abruptly yet with incomparable grace, and in five minutes was sleeping on the floor, with a smooth wooden pillow under his head, and a priceless silk robe pulled up to his chin.

It was still dark when Ugichi awoke, so dark that he was obliged to light candles to see his way about. This was to be a busy and important morning, and he began by making tea and breakfasting frugally upon biscuit. Then he filled the portable tub with very hot water, and took a thorough bath, using not alone soap, but pumice stone until his amber colored limbs shone like marble.

Next, he carefully pared his rather long nails, saving the parings and inclosing them in a little square of rice paper. The packet he sealed up in an envelope, together with a letter over which he spent much time. Finally he stamped and addressed it, leaving it conspicuously displayed upon a table which he hauled into the center of the big studio.

It is written that King Xerxes, encamped before Thermopylæ, sent a spy to report concerning the doings of the immortal Three Hundred who held the pass the night before the Persians attacked. And when the spy reported that they were seated silently about their camp fires, each man braiding his long hair in the manner prescribed for those about to die, Xerxes was answered. He knew that the Three Hundred had taken leave of life, and were prepared to fight to the death.

The act of Ugichi's was of a similar significance. It is a part of the Nipponese tradition that some part of one's body, however ignoble or fragmentary, must be buried by his ancestors. All sear-faring men, soldiers, and others the hazards of whose vocations subject them to the possibility of leaving their bones in far countries, or beneath the waves, make extraordinary and to our way of thinking, even grotesque prepara-



tions to fulfill the ancient custom. Every student of Japan knows this, and what is implied. And so when Ugichi made ready his home letter, it was an indication that he was about to subject himself to the calamity of intrusting his body to an alien soil, and that he was sending to Nippon some morsel of himself, which would in due time be buried with all the pomp of the Shinto ritual.

Having done this, Ugichi lighted three little tapers of incense and placed them upon a low stool, before which he bowed profoundly, and then, squatting down, began a long chant, which was half prayer, and half eulogy. It was directed to his honorable ancestors; and in its bare simplicity it was a rather terrible harangue. For, stripped of its Oriental imagery, it began by praising the manifest virtues and adornments of his ancestors, and ended by begging them, if he failed in the enterprise he was about to undertake, and still lived, to abjure his spirit when in the course of time it should appear before them; to reject it as unworthy, and to condemn it to dwell forever among aliens and among those benighted souls who never had any honorable ancestors of their own!

Finally, he dressed for the street, first putting on a stout canvas shirt, and a silk sash, into which he thrust a beautiful and deadly knife, whose handle was of shark-skin and the steel whereof was broad and thick and of a temper as perfect as anything that Damascus ever produced, the product of untold centuries of Japanese artisanship. Its gold lacquer sheath contained several little knives, each about four or five inches long, thrust into slots. These were the "throwing knives" used before the adversaries should come to close grips with one another; and in the old Samurai days the number of these knives indicated the rank of the nobleman.

Ugichi was of Samurai blood. He greatly despised foreigners, as races, though he was capable of profound affection for them as individuals. Even Count Vaudreuil he regarded as an amiable upstart; for his family was practically unknown a thousand years ago. Ugichi's honorable ancestors had possessed an elaborate system of eti-

quette, philosophy, and art, at a time when European gentlemen roosted in trees at night, cracked bones with their teeth to get at the succulent marrow within, and on very special occasions when they could not avoid the trouble, smeared themselves with the blue clay which was the claw hammer, the soup-and-fish garment of their age.

Because George Strong had treated him, not as a servant, but as an equal, had drunk tea with him, had virtually made him his guest, and because furthermore Ugichi beheld him for what he was, a wholesome, sunny, big hearted and courageous boy, he gave him his unswerving devotion. Nothing of this had shone in his inscrutable eyes, his stolid and impenetrable Oriental features; but it was in his heart. So he was going to bring George out of that sinister house in which he had been swallowed up.

He was to call on his way for Mme. Volontiers, who knew his intention. His final act ere setting forth was to take a large paper box, about the size of a square hat box, and wrap it up carefully in brown paper, tied with tape. This he addressed to the number of the street whither he was going. And instead of wearing his usual hat, he clapped on his head a sort of leather visored cap such as messenger boys wear; a cap he had used when in the employ of Count Vaudreuil he bore boxes of bonbons and bouquets of flowers or urgent invitations to the pretty ladies of the Left Bank.

He found *madame* waiting for him, dressed with unusual care, and looking, Ugichi privately admitted, almost as pretty as one of the Geisha girls of his own Nagasaki. Directly he appeared, she gave a final pat to her smart hat, and closed and locked her door.

"All ready?" she asked.

Ugichi smiled blandly.

"Yess. I go get Meester George now."

Mme. Volontiers wrinkled her forehead.

"They are bad men, Ugichi; dangerous ones. And you are but one against so many—how many I do not know!"

Ugichi smiled again.

"I get him," he repeated.

This time a *fia* was engaged; one of those historical affairs that have catered to the bohemian element for so long a period

that their drivers are never surprised at anything except a big tip. And it was understood that *madame*, waiting discreetly around the corner in this conveyance, should if neither George nor Ugichi appeared within half an hour, call in the police. It would, in such case, unquestionably have become a police affair.

They rattled cheerfully across the Seine, along aged cobbled streets where proof etchings and onions and fresh tripe and antique rings were being hawked; an incongruous pair, the brilliant, glowing little woman in her modish gown, the impassive descendant of twenty centuries of close bred culture and quartz-hard inhibitions. Presently, at a signal, the *cocher* drew up beside a little fountain beneath a plane tree. Here they bade him wait, and Ugichi led *madame* to the corner of the street, from which she could watch him and identify the house he entered.

He was an inconspicuous figure as he jogged along, bearing his great box, his messenger's cap pulled low over his beady black eyes, his lips almost soundlessly whistling a tuneless air. No one of the few who passed favored him with a second glance, or an afterthought.

At the stoop of the thin, four story brick house, he knocked, after vainly looking for a bell. For a considerable time nobody answered. At long length, a pair of bolts were drawn rustily back from within, and the door swung open a bare six inches. A man with the face of a Barbary ape looked forth. Ugichi noted that a heavy chain held the door to its prescribed interstice. He smiled blandly.

"Box, for No. 76, *bis*," he hissed.

The servant hesitated, glanced up and down the street.

"*Bien*," he growled. "Give yourself the trouble to set it down, and I will get it in a moment or so."

Ugichi smiled again, and shook his head.

"No can do," he said, speaking in execrable French, but yet making himself understood. "Muss give, get receipt."

The man grunted, and then threw the chain wide enough for the parcel to pass. Ugichi, instead of handing it to him, stepped swiftly inside. An instant later,

and the door slammed. Mme. Volontiers, peeping around the corner two blocks below, returned draggily to her fiacre, and entered it to await what might befall.

## VIII.

THE genial George awakened when the sun struck over a tangle of crooked roofs and tiled gables, and touched his swollen face. He lay on his back and fully clad even to his shoes in a bed of a room rather better furnished than one might have been led to expect from the building's exterior. But of the outside appearance, George had no recollection. It took him some little time to work back to the last thing he did clearly remember; the fine uppercut he had delivered to the little man, in the fight in Mme. Volontiers's studio.

With the thought came a deadly fear as to her fate. Was she a prisoner, or worse, dead? He groaned, and started to feel of his aching temple, where the *coup de pied* of the man who had stolen up behind him had terminated the affair, so far as George was concerned. But his hand refused to obey. Something held it, and its fellow.

Kicking the bed covering off, and squinting down, he perceived that he was fettered in a manner familiar to madhouses and penal institutions. A stout and thick leather belt encircled his waist, buckled behind. Smaller, but equally strong straps fastened to each side, held his wrists. They were also buckled behind, so that one could not work them loose in any way, as for instance with the teeth.

While he was speculating upon this inconvenience, the single door to his chamber rattled, a key turned, and there entered a man of somewhat better presence than the three he had met the night before. He bore a tray of food, which he deposited on a little stand at the head of the bed.

"*Bon jour, monsieur*," he saluted as casually as if he had served George thus for years.

"Say—what's the big idea?" demanded the prisoner in English. The man shrugged, and regretted that he was not a linguist. George tried again, in his best French. Why was he held in bonds? And where?



What was it all about, And who the devil was he whom he had the honor to address?

The man replied to the first and last queries.

*Monsieur* might call him Bastien; surnames were quite unnecessary, "*Ici, nous sommes sans ceremonie*," he smilingly stated. And the gentleman was thus secured lest he do himself a harm; since he was quite violent the night previous.

"How am I going to eat?"

Bastien replied by dragging him, with George's clumsy help, to a sitting posture, with the pillows stuffed behind him against the headboard. Then he proceeded to feed George, as if he were an infant. Humiliating as the situation was, he ate heartily. He was surprised to find how well he felt. Save for a ringing in his head, and a soreness over the right temple, he seemed as good as new. He downed an omelet, buttered rolls, two cups of coffee; and then asked for a smoke, half expecting to be refused.

But whatever plans were making for his future, it was evident that he was to be treated for the time being with reasonable liberality. Bastien produced a box of cigarettes, and some cigars. Because his hands were fettered, and the cigarette smoker is nearly as dependent upon them as is a Jewish orator, George chose a cigar. Bastien placed it not inelegantly in his mouth, and applied the necessary vesta. Then he lighted a tiny alcohol burner on the stand, and told George that he could manage, from this, to light as many cigars or cigarettes as he chose; and, taking up the empty tray, turned toward the door.

"How long am I to be your guest?" George called after him. The man paused, fixed him with a singular look, and waited deliberately before replying, choosing his words with care.

"That, *monsieur*, is in other hands than mine. You are in possession of grave information which you may choose to misuse; and you have ventured to interfere with one of our trusted agents. Your fate has not, I believe, been determined."

With which not altogether cheering words, he turned again, passed from the room and locked the door behind him.

Left alone, George pondered means of getting out of his harness. He scrutinized it more carefully. It certainly was not breakable by any force at his command, and it was too tough to be gnawed through by his excellent teeth. Hours of toil might fray it against some sharp surface, if he could find such; but it was very doubtful if he were to be left to himself for hours. He felt certain that Bastien, or another, would look in on him frequently. His eyes turned, by chance, to the tiny blue flame of the alcohol burner. Fire! That would take the life of the best rawhide, and in short order. How could he manage to connect with it?

Listening carefully, but hearing nothing to indicate that any one was outside his door, he rose to his feet and approached the little table. As he stood by the burner, the flame was at the height of his chest. Then he pushed and kneed, as quietly as possible, a light chair against the table; and, kneeling upon its seat, raising and lowering his body till the proper elevation was secured, he had the satisfaction of seeing the blue flame caress the solid leather belt.

An abominable stench rose to his nostrils. Were he to be interrupted, the odor would certainly betray him. He leaned in closer, and in so doing nearly extinguished the precious flame. But already the leather was growing black and brittle, with little cracks radiating out from the core of heat. In a surprisingly short time, not much more than Houdini himself would have required, he had destroyed the vitality of the belt over a space equal to its width, and a tremendous outward thrust of both hands caused it to part raggedly. Sitting in the chair, it was easy to pass the belt underneath, bringing his two hands together. From this position, one hand was able to unbuckle the other; and he stood free, swinging his cramped arms, trying out his leg muscles, proving to himself that he was, so to speak, ready for the bell.

It was at this instant that a din from far below, but undoubtedly in the house itself, came to his ears. There was a thrashing about, the sound of slamming doors and padding feet, oaths and cries. What it portended he could only guess. It might be the

fortunate arrival of the police. It might, less probably, be an amateur expedition to rescue him. Or, mutiny might have broken out among his captors.

Whatever it was, it behooved him to take advantage of the confusion, and get into the game. Now, if ever, was his time; now, with his harness cast off, and the attention of the inmates drawn below stairs to whatever it was that was going on. He leaped for the door, shook it, and found it a solid affair. He rammed it with his big shoulder, as a football guard slams into the interference. It scarcely creaked.

Casting his eyes wildly about, and observing only flimsy furniture that would crumple up if used as a battering ram, he noted a long marble shelf over a fireplace. It contained an ornate clock, and two silly Dresden peasants in gala attire, simpering at one another. Without bothering to remove them, he made a mighty wrench at the shelf, and it came loose; a slab over four feet in length, and weighing more than a hundred pounds. With this in both hands, he rammed into the door once more. It bludgeoned through a thick panel as a dull knife through cheese. A second blow, better aimed, and the entire section containing knob and lock gave, and he staggered from the momentum out into the dark hall.

The instant Ugichi wormed himself into the hall, the doorkeeper realized that something was wrong. He half turned, calling shrilly up the stairway. It was the last sound he made.

To the careless eye, the Japanese was a plump, inoffensive little man. It is true that he was well nourished; but Nippon regards a reasonable amount of fat as essential in athletics. And were one to thrust a finger into any part of Ugichi's body, its firm substance would spring back resiliently. It is probable that were he to fall from a roof, he would bounce like a rubber ball. He was small, like most of his race, but he was virtually one mass of gristle.

There was nothing he did not know about his national method of attack and defense, the jujutsu, an all-comprehensive system designed to meet adversaries singly or in groups, armed or unarmed, big or little. It

was designed centuries ago for the exclusive use of the Samurai, who lost face if they dishonored their swords upon common flesh. Later, the rudiments were taught to the police, and the military; but the noblemen were still the custodians of the most deadly blows and grips, the "touches of death," of which there were a score or more, only three or four of which were taught to the proletarian. Ugichi knew all of them, and while he had fetched along his knife, it was only for a last resort. He trusted that his honorable ancestors, looking down from the high heavens of their deserved bliss, might note that his knife was still unstained. In a life of many parts, he had been among other things, a policeman in Port Said. Which is, as one might say, *enough* said!

The instant the doorman gave warning, Ugichi dropped his empty package, glided close, and seized him by the neck, with a hard and ruthless thumb pressed close beneath each ear. There is, between the jugular and the carotid, a tiny nerve known as the *phrenic*. It occupies, on the surface, a spot no bigger than a large pea, and is not easy to find; but Ugichi knew perfectly where to find it. Instant collapse follows, since this nerve controls the diaphragm, hence the breathing. Under the intense pressure the doorman passed into oblivion, and slumped to the floor. Ugichi knelt nonchalantly, and, one after the other, broke a forearm over his thigh, as one might break kindling wood. He did not wish the doorman to take further part in what was bound to follow.

He rose just as, in answer to the hail, Langouste came tearing down the front stairs to the rescue. Instead of retreating, Ugichi moved rapidly forward to meet him, and as Langouste lunged wildly at him, seized his outthrust arm, turned his back, bent it, and pulled as hard as he could. Added to the momentum of Langouste, this assistance sent him crashing into the front door with such force that for a second he lay stunned; but Langouste was both tough and, for his size, remarkably quick. He rose before the Japanese could close with him. Whereupon Ugichi stepped through the portières into a little room beside the hall.



Every race has its peculiar style of attack. There is much to be said for the *savate* of France. Theoretically, one makes equal use of arms and legs, of hands and feet; but inasmuch as this is never true in practice of any sport, even an ambidextrous tennis player invariably favoring one hand slightly over the other, so in *la savate*, the brunt of the attack has come to be borne by the feet. The *savatier* is, when compared with a good boxer, a subject of pity. But his kick is nearly as deadly as that of an ostrich, and delivered with a speed and cleverness unbelievable.

Langouste was as good a *savatier* as Ugichi was master of his own peculiar method. The contest which ensued would have been interesting to any lover of sports. Neither of the two now engaged underrated the other. But sought to disable certainly, and were perfectly willing to kill. The Frenchman sought to make it a fight at long range, where his kicks would be effective; for at infighting he can do little more than kick shins; a painful but not fatal gesture. Besides, Ugichi's were protected by layer upon layer of cotton cloth, wound puttee-wise. The Japanese tried to come to grips, of course.

Round and round the little room they circled, overturning vases and chairs, *objets de vertu*, a writing desk. Twice one of Langouste's long legs flashed up and round in a half circle, missing Ugichi's head by inches as he ducked or leaped back; and twice the Jap grasped with talons of iron some portion of Langouste's clothing which, parting with a shrill rip, enabled him to escape.

About the doorway clustered three or four watching men; they enjoyed the spectacle too much to interfere. Besides, they had every confidence in Langouste, a noted *savatier* and rough-house fighter, and if anything went wrong, why, then they could by sheer numbers overwhelm the Nipponese.

At length there came an instant when the Frenchman, maneuvered into a corner, was obliged to work out; which he attempted by a short upward kick delivered at Ugichi's groin. Quick as a flash the little man, drawing in his stomach, shot

out both hands and seized the other's ankle. In no time at all Langouste was flat on his back; and then, twisting the leg as one might twist a paper spill for lighting a pipe, Ugichi made of that leg a thing that was to be perfectly useless to its owner during the remainder of his life. Bones, sinews, nerves, muscles were spiraled together like a rope. With a single howl of anguish, Langouste was granted the mercy of unconsciousness.

When after a dazed moment the four men clustered at the door rushed in, Ugichi noted that the leader bore a knife. Involuntarily his hand sought the sharkskin haft of his own, then as quickly withdrew. No! Not yet would he forsake the honorable jujutsu, the fit chastisement to be dealt out to pigs of foreigners! The knife could wait.

He caught the knife hand of the leader as he closed in. Then, with open palm, he struck sharply with its outer edge against the cricoid cartilage, humbly known as Adam's apple. This blow, delivered with sufficient force, is one of the "vital touches" of jujutsu, and will at the least cause temporary paralysis of the throat.

The fellow dropped, and the next moment the little room seemed to be full of flying arms and legs.

## IX.

UPSTAIRS much was happening.

Still clutching at his marble mantel, George reeled out into the semidark hall. It happened that he was the sole occupant of the top story; but from the floor below three men appeared in answer to the crash of splintering door panels. They were running upstairs, rather in one another's way, in their eagerness. Bastien, he who had brought George's breakfast, led them.

The young American relieved himself of the burden of the marble slab by heaving it at the advancing trio. Two of them escaped by throwing themselves to one side; but its edge caught and scalped Bastien as neatly as ever a Sioux performed the operation.

Throughout the fracas the criminal band was handicapped by lack of weapons. They

did not wish to use revolvers, because of the danger of attracting the police; but they had several in the house, and each of them possessed a knife, some of them leaden slungshots. Trouble was, they counted too much on their superior numbers. Bastien had two knives on him; but Bastien was quite out of the picture, his scalp dangling about his ears. The doorman had also been heavily armed; but Ugichi had at once crippled him. One of the others that the Jap had encountered also carried a knife, as we have seen, but failed to make the best use of it when the test came.

The other men were more or less in dis-habille; the hour was early, and some of them were not even dressed. Of the rest, they had laid aside their knives, not dreaming that they would be called upon to fight, at least without plenty of time to prepare. Therefore, even when Bastien's loss was replaced by the arrival of two others from the floor below, the odds were not so great as might appear. George faced four desperate criminals, two of whom at least had records for homicide; but since they were below him, none could use their knowledge of *la savate*, and none of them were as good practitioners as Langouste.

Descending step by step, careful of his footing, George flailed away with crushing right hooks and stabbing lefts; and, foot by foot, gathering strength and fury as his hard knuckles crunched against flesh and bone, he beat them down one by one. Not that he escaped unscathed; here and there an unskillful but hearty wallop landed in his midriff, and one little gutter rat, who had slipped to the stairs, bit him painfully in the leg, through trousers and all. But in a very short time, as time goes by the clock, he had gained the floor below, leaving no one able to follow him up from the rear.

The next flight was easier, yet in a way harder. By now the enemy was drawn two ways; several had gone downstairs to eliminate the crazy Oriental who was mussing up their reception room; and in George's path stood but one man. But he was a tremendously broad, thick-set fellow, a Norman, totally unlike his more undersized, wiry city comrades. He was perfectly com-

posed, and had the intelligence not to put himself at a disadvantage by walking upstairs against George, and so having to fight from underneath. Instead, he stepped back and waited for the prisoner to reach the landing.

The instant George crossed the last step, the big man was on him in a flash. He was astonishingly quick for so heavy a person, one weighing about the same as George, though a head shorter. The blows he struck, while not those of a trained boxer, were punishing ones, the sort of rough-and-ready style of a seafaring man who has established himself in many a fore-castle as bully. For two minutes the issue hung in doubt. Both men were dealing knockouts with each hand; it was merely a question of which one first landed clean.

But skill plus brute strength will, usually, beat either alone. There came a rally, toe to toe, when a wild swing left the big Norman's jaw exposed for a fleeting instant; and George's right hung one flush on the button, with every ounce of his hundred and eighty-five pounds behind it, with a lift from the heel to help out. A broken lower maxillary, and oblivion, were the portions of the sailorman.

Three steps at a time George tore his unimpeded way, to burst into the little room where a tangle of Franco-Japanese profanity and assault-with-intent-to-kill prevailed. It was all so bewildering that it took the American a minute to distinguish friend from foe.

He beheld the face of his faithful Ugichi, and then, before he could move, it was replaced by that of one of the remaining Apaches. Finally he got his bearings, edged in and yanked out one of the latter, putting him away with a smash flush on the nose; and at almost the same instant Ugichi did something exceedingly unpleasant and effective to the other. Just what it was, George could not see, it was done so quickly; but the fight was over!

East met West, as the brown man and the white shook hands over the sprawled figures of their late hosts. Bruised lips parted in happy grins. Eyes already beginning to close flashed with the zest of battle won.

The way to the outside world was now



clear; but both men hesitated. The same idea was at work in subtle Oriental brain and in judicious Caucasian.

"Let's go over and see if we've over-looked anybody, Ugichi!"

"Yess, sar. We go."

But nobody had been neglected. It had been a free party, with everybody more than welcome. After ransacking this headquarters of the underworld, their sole find was a miserable little runt of a man hiding and shivering in a pantry; and neither Ugichi nor George had the heart to beat him up. He was dragged forth and kicked downstairs.

"We'll leave him to mop up," George decided. "Let him look after his dead and wounded."

Even yet the Japanese was reluctant to go. It was his remorselessly logical Oriental notion that it would be a grand idea to break the neck of each of their victims.

"*I do it so easy*," he pleaded.

But this was too much for the American. He vetoed the idea decisively. So they passed out of the narrow brick house, and down its three steps, and turned toward the waiting fiacre, where the distracted Mme. Volontiers was on the point of summoning the police.

She threw her arms about George's neck, unabashed by the presence on the opposite seat of the stolid Ugichi. She crooned over his bruises until he blushed fiery red while he reiterated that they were mere scratches. Finally, in a desperate attempt to stem the tide, he fondled a glittering necklace of green stones she was wearing, and asked her what they were.

"Ah, my Georges! I shall tell you. It is I who have deceive you. These stone, they are emeralds. Figure yourself, it was not of the bank books I have fear that Langouste, that sacred pig of a brother, would find! *Nenni!* For these jewel—and many more, some pearl, a little diamonds, they belong to my mother, who was of great family. A fortune, you will say. But, yes; it is so. And my poor father, when he lose his little fortune, he never will sell from me these jewels of my mother. 'Delphine,' he would say to me—for that is my true name, *mon Georges*, Delphine

Grandchamps—'Delphine, these shall one day be for your dot! I will not touch them.' And so, *voici!* You have save me from despair. But I do not forgive myself that I bring you so close to death. Not never do I forgive!"

"Shucks!" grumbled George. "I had the time of my life. And so did Ugichi here, if I'm any judge!"

The Japanese grinned, and lovingly fingered his honorable knife. He had won without having to sully its blade with base blood!

Delphine begged to be allowed to dress the wounds of her warrior; of both of them. But George laughingly refused. They stopped at a chemist's for some iodine and collodion and absorbent cotton, and left her at her own door, with her promise that she would drop in for tea. Then they returned to the Street of the Broken Jug, where the two men patched one another up.

Ugichi rustled tinned soup and some cold meat from a food shop, and then George threw himself into an easy chair in the little den, with a glass of dry sherry at hand and a good cigar between his lips, ruminating pleasurably upon the lively times one may manage to have without any money!

He was getting drowsy in the rays of the afternoon sun when some one knocked at the door. Ugichi answered the summons, and after a moment appeared at the entrance to the den.

"Meester George Strong," he announced.

For an instant George gaped stupidly at the thought that Count Vaudreuil must have eluded the vigilance of his charming wife, and returned to the scenes of his bohemian existence; but before he could rise, heavy, firm steps shook his floor, and there stood framed in it a big, square-shouldered, gray-haired man wearing a Stetson hat and carrying a walking stick the size of a club.

With a shout George sprang from his seat and threw himself into the elder man's arms.

"Dad! Dear old dad! Of all people in the world. How—"

The eyes of the father were moist as he shook himself free, and held his son at arm's length, in a grip in which even George, Jr., seemed helpless as a little boy,

"Thought I'd better not write, but take a run across and see for myself just how much of a damned fool you've been making of yourself! After all, George, I've got a lot of interest to keep me in New York, but I've only got one boy, if he is a simpleton!"

Fine old dad! Foursquare to the world, taking no back talk from any man, loyal to the core, asking no odds, dropping everything to cross the Atlantic just because he feared his son was in mischief and needed help! Thus incoherently ran George's thoughts as he dragged a chair up for his father, and indicated the wine closet and the cigars.

After a little, the old man discovered a bottle of special Scotch, and Ugichi produced a cold siphon.

"George, somehow I never can take any comfort drinking any more back home," his father confessed. "Seems disloyal, somehow. My country—right or wrong—has gone theoretically dry. I try to stand it. But, oh, boy! It's good to have one or two—no more at a time—when there isn't any sneaking down back alleys or fishing hip pockets for it. And, by the way," he concluded, "in a brief time you seem to have become rather a connoisseur? I note a number of brands here that I used to know something about."

George hastened to explain the curious situation whereby he had fallen heir to a lot of good liquor and cigars, as well as a cozy home. His father sipped his Scotch, and puffed at a fat Havana, encouraging him here and there with a pointed question, until he had the whole story of his son's hectic life in the brief weeks since his arrival in Paris.

Nothing escaped the elder's keen attention. He made note of the frequency with which the name of Mme. Volontiers—that is, of Delphine Grandchamps appeared.

"Why an alias?" he asked pointedly.

"Because of the shame of her brother's disgrace," George explained. "You'll meet her pretty soon. She's coming in to tea."

His father grunted noncommittally, and George proceeded with an account of the glorious fight in the Marais. That is, the second one; the first ended too soon and

too disastrously. Ugichi was called in and made to demonstrate some of his disabling tactics, and George, on his part, modestly confessed that he had dealt out some little sleep producers himself.

When Ugichi had gone out for supplies for dinner, since George looked far too bungled up to appear in a public café or hotel, his father, having heard the last detail of the great fight, spoke his mind.

"Looks like you'll have to do something to rehabilitate the name of Strong here, George, after what the count did to it with his parties. Besides, I guess you like the town pretty well, or would if you had a little spending money. But if I leave you here, Ugichi has got to be induced to stick along as a sort of bodyguard. I'll feel safer about you."

He went on to suggest that George open up a sort of Paris branch of his father's enterprises, to handle his Continental affairs.

"Of course, I'll have to ship you a secretary. Some one who knows business methods, especially my methods. Some one you'll like. It won't do any harm to have a Strong here in person; and you must be willing to be a sort of pupil of the man I'll send you. You'll be the heir apparent, so to speak, but he will be the regent for a while."

"Didn't know you had any European affairs, sir?"

Strong, Sr., rolled his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"Haven't much of anything," he confessed. "But I'll get us a mess of them before I go home. I just bought a date farm down in Africa; just a little piece, about seven thousand acres. A gamble. May not pan out. You can take a run down there later on. Then, I have a couple of palaces I got at a bargain in Vienna, which I'm going to make over into hotels or apartment houses or something. And I've got more stock than I wish I had in a Marseilles olive oil concern. That, too, you must look over by and by."

Twilight came, and with it Delphine.

To George, anxiously scanning his father's "poker face," as he called it, it was hard to tell his opinion of the little lady. But presently it became apparent that her



charm was not merely for the young man; and after Ugichi had fetched the tea things, their party became almost hilarious.

In the very midst of it another summons at the door called Ugichi. Presently the Japanese stood gravely at the entrance to the den, and with a twinkle in his impenetrable black eyes, softly hissed: "Meester George Strong—and lady!"

"Love of Mike!" gasped Strong, Sr. "How many George Strong's are there around these diggings, anyhow?"

In the studio were the Count and Countess Vaudreuil, with the lavender-gloved Sangrado hovering in the rear like a fallen angel. Introductions of a stormy and vociferous nature followed. The countess, as golden and blue and charming as ever, and as capable, for the first time met Delphine. Strong, Sr., for the first time met real nobility. It was some time before everybody had met everybody else.

The announcement by Ugichi that dinner was prepared broke the ice; and shortly all were seated about a genuine Japanese feast which did credit to Ugichi's culinary skill, considering the short time he had had to evince it, and the rough morning's work he had gone through.

During the mushroom course, Count Vaudreuil explained their presence. Greatly worried over the plight of "Mme. Volontiers," and fearful of what her wicked brother, Langouste, might do to her, he had made a clean breast of all to his wife. There was nothing to be ashamed of; she had, in fact, known of his boyish attachment, though she had forgotten it.

Her good heart led her to insist that Edouard return at once and see the affair through; but for prudent reasons of her own, she decided to accompany him. Arriving unannounced, they had the felicity to learn that all was well, and to meet not only the lady herself, but the young gentleman with whom Monsieur le Comte de Vaudreuil had playfully exchanged identities, to the downfall of both.

"It needed but your presence, sir," the count concluded, "to make our happiness complete!"

Whereupon he rose and proposed a toast, first to Mlle. Delphine, and then to George's father.

When these had been drunk, and the famous story of the fight retold, Strong, Sr., insisted upon hearing once again, and from the lips of the lady herself, the matchless narrative of the perambulator with its Bologna sausage.

So Delphine, between delicate puffs of her cigarette and tiny sips of *café gloria*, told the tale in her inimitably piquant manner.

And when she had finished, George Strong, Sr., threw his bomb. He squinted up his eyes, flicked the long gray ash from his cigar, and remarked to the count and to the table at large:

"Well, by the way these young folks look at each other, I'd say it was within the possibilities that they may some day be wheeling a baby carriage with something a lot more precious than a sausage in it!"

A jest whose truly Gallic flavor was appreciated by everybody but George, and at which even the saturnine Sangrado grinned!

### THE END



## THE GUN FANNER

BY KENNETH PERKINS

(ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY, June 10 to July 1, 1922), has been made into a motion picture for TOM MIX under the title "Romance Land," and can now be seen on screens throughout the country. Released by Fox Film Company.



# The Stranger at the Gate

By MAX BRAND

Author of "Dan Barry's Daughter," "The Night Horseman," etc.

## WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PART I.

**H**IGH spirited Olivetta Dascom is informed by her father, Hugh Dascom, an idle gentleman, that it is her duty to marry to improve the family fortunes, which have fallen since the death of old Commodore Dascom. In a sudden temper she declares that she will marry the first man who comes through the gate of their Long Island estate. Through the entrance strides a tall stranger. He explains that he is John Hodge, an amateur historian searching for information concerning an old pirate.

Later a little sloop sails into the cove and strikes a rock. Samuel Logan, its owner, and Louis Kern, his only sailor, swim ashore and are taken into the Dascom house. Hodge and Olivetta stroll through the garden in the moonlight and Olivetta wonders if he will make love to her.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MOON MAGIC.

**B**UT she knew on the instant that he was *not* a fool; she knew it because of his spoken admission. "I'm terribly afraid that I'm about to talk like an idiot," he said.

"About what?" said Olivetta because, of course, she knew exactly what he meant. She looked up cautiously at him. The profile was more and more ominously aquiline.

His face was hollowed by black shadows to a cadaverous meagerness. He looked at that moment less like the historian of a pirate than like the bloody old wayfarer of the seas himself.

"I'd like to begin with the fragrance in this wind. What sort of blossoms go to the making of it? Have you an idea?"

"Well, there is the perfume from the roses on the climbing vines about the pergola, don't you think?"

"I might have known that without ask-

*This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for November 3.*



ing. That bitter sweetness is always from some kind of a rose."

"Is that the idiotic talk you mentioned?"

"Not at all. That is merely one of the things out of which the final folly springs."

"Explain that."

"I don't think I need to," said John Hodge.

"You are leaning heavily on innuendo."

"No. I have become blunt. I merely mean that you must feel just a touch of the same thing. The roses and the showering of the fountain—and the stir of the wind—and the curve of this hill pressing us up into the heart of the sky—you see?"

"You help me to see, amazingly," said Olivetta.

"What I mean is that such stuff is dangerous. Take each thing by itself, and each is beautiful, but blend them altogether and you have an explosive. Isn't that clear?"

"What sort of an explosive?"

"Ah," said John Hodge. "Now you are asking for exact information. And we have been dealing in vapors of the mind. Too much daylight frankness spoils everything. We are living under the moon, dear lady."

He smiled on her. Even by that dim light she saw the gathering of his brow, the glitter of his eyes beneath, and the sardonic curve of his lips.

"I am a matter of fact person," said Olivetta, her heart beating madly, "It is hard for me to follow you."

"For a step or two, no doubt," replied the historian. "But once inside the door—well, you would never recognize your sober self."

"Because of the flowers and the wind and the fountain?"

"If you wish to call it that. I dare not go behind the face and form of things and try to show what they in reality are. At least, I can't venture alone. If the influence were to begin to take hold on you, however—"

"Well?"

"That would be very different."

"How does one tell its progress?"

"By the way the heart beats, for one thing."

"My pulse is normal, thank you," said Olivetta.

"Then there is a leaping of the spirits," went on the historian, "That is a sure token."

"A leaping of the spirits?"

"Which makes the whole world a better place to live in."

"H-m!" said Olivetta, and dropped her head as though in thought, but really so that the shadow would hide her smile.

"And whatever is near one seems pleasant. For instance, to me there is a breath of life in the very showerings of this fountain, and the fragrance in the wind seems to curl and linger around us here—"

"I am sure that is very poetic," said Olivetta in her most wideawake and noon-day voice.

He ran on, leaning back in the seat and clasping his hands about his knee. "It transforms everything with a ghostly beauty. See that garden plot yonder—that one with the little low hedges of white flowers—you can just glimpse the moon shimmering on them through that gap in the shrubbery—well, although you are sitting here very real and wideawake and concrete, I can see your daylight ghost walking yonder with the sun in your hair, leaning to pick the flowers."

"Oh!" said Olivetta.

"And find a ghost of myself asking the ghost of yourself: 'Lady, why did you walk down the garden path to meet me?'"

He paused. But it was not for an answer. Before she could speak he had gone on breezily: "And your spirit answers: 'I have not come to meet you. I have only come to pick these flowers, as you might see, you stupid fellow, if you were willing to use your eyes.'"

"I think that my spirit is extremely impudent," said Olivetta.

"But truthful?"

"But truthful," she agreed, entranced.

"As I was saying, that is the sort of folly that comes into one from the mixture of garden flowers and garden moonlight—"

"I shouldn't call such explosiveness really dangerous, should you?"

"Ah, but you don't know," said John Hodge. "You haven't the slightest idea of what it leads to." He paused. "Or, I wonder—haven't you, after all?"

"An idea of what?"

"Of the end of such a trail?"

"What does my ghost yonder among the white flowers say?"

"She is not talking at all. She is only smiling."

"As mute as that?"

"It is all that my heart desires."

And the words struck home in her. They beat down barriers. In an instant the thought of him was admitted into some heart of hearts where it had never gone before, where the thought of no other man had ever gone. She found herself about to say: "Do you mean it? Are you serious?" But she held that impulse under check. Of course he did not mean it. It was all jest. It was all game.

And yet, why was it that her heart was racing and her breath so short? Why was it that a wild happiness and a wild fear began to grow, began to rise in her throat? And it seemed to Olivetta that the meeting among the white flowers had been, indeed, a ghostly meeting long ago—it seemed that she had known him many years—that he had returned for an instant only after the long separation and that he must go again at once.

Such a rush of thoughts poured into her mind that she was dazed. She arose. She felt that she must put a distance between them in order to be safe.

"Are you going in?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

"I have offended you?"

"Of course not. Only—"

"You will come back?"

"No—"

"I'll wait for you." He did not seem to have heard her denial. "After all, the best of the evening is still before us!"

She walked hurriedly across the garden to the house, ran up the steps, and entered the hall. There, in the shadow, she stopped short. With a vague eye she saw her father in the big library at the left talking earnestly with Samuel Chester Logan, who was leaning over the globe and, as he listened, turning it idly—the great inlaid steel globe which had been the pride of Commodore Dascom. How well she could remember that terrible old man as, on many an eve-

ning, he leaned over the globe and pointed out his travels. How his wild white hair had stood on end as though he perpetually sat in a high wind—how his deeply shadowed eye had burned out at them. Truly, it was easy to believe that the blood of the Red Captain actually flowed in the commodore's veins!

She turned away from that picture and faced toward the outer night again. What must John Hodge be thinking of her after her foolish flight? And why had she run away? She stepped to the door of the library, and when her father and the cast-away rose, she waved them back to their chairs. She had been strolling, she told them, and when they invited her in, she declined. The night was still too young.

"And where's John Hodge?" asked her father.

"I don't know. I think he's down by the water," said Olivetta.

She bit her lip as she turned away. Why had she lied about Hodge? With burning cheeks she went back into the cool of the night, went angrily. She would make her excuses. She would bid John Hodge good night, and then she would be gone.

She found him in the same position, his head back, his hands clasped about his knee.

"I had to make my excuses to my father and Mr. Logan," she said.

"And now you are free for the evening?" he suggested.

"And now I must go in," she said. Suddenly she flushed hotter than ever. Once she had left him, why had she not stayed away? Why did she come trooping back here to report progress like a child? Yes, and John Hodge, as he stood up for her, was laughing softly. No doubt he saw how ridiculous her behavior had been.

"John Hodge!" she cried at him. "Why are you laughing?"

"I have stopped, you see."

"John Hodge, you were right. There is some sort of moon magic in this garden to-night. My head has been whirling!"

"You, too?" said he. "You, too?"

He came toward her. She retreated, but she had gone weak at the knees. She could not move quickly enough to avoid him, it seemed. Was she moving at all?



"It is in the air," he said. "It lingers around this place, within the whisper of this fountain, don't you think? And so you've come back to it? You've missed it?"

"Yes," whispered Olivetta.

"Ah!" cried John Hodge. "You heart-stopping little beauty!"

Her mind worked with wonderful speed and precision, but her body was numbed. She saw what was about to happen and strove to fight against it. But she could not lift the weight of a finger against him while he took her in his arms, tilted back her head, kissed her lips.

It was of his own accord that he freed her and stepped away. She could not speak.

"I'm terribly sorry," he said, but there was no sorrow in his voice.

Still she could not answer. She kept staring at him in horror—dread lest he should take her again in his arms—dread lest he should not! And all the time there was the mute wonder at the strange manner in which her volition had been chained. But her silence was doing more than words could have done.

"Miss Dascom," he was saying, and this time there was all earnestness in his tone, "I repeat that I'm ashamed. I—I should have stayed on my side of the fence, I know. I should have played the game. But—but the infernal moonshine was really in my blood—and you were so beautiful—I'm overwhelmed with humiliation!"

She tried to find her tongue at that. It was her clew, she felt, to make some gracious remark. But she could find none. Her mind was a strange blank. With every instant of silence his distress was converted to a greater agony of mortification.

"Miss Dascom!" he pleaded. And then: "Shall I leave you?"

He took that further silence as a command and retreated.

"I shall leave the house in the morning," he said. And: "I cannot tell you how troubled I am. Good night, Miss Dascom!"

She watched him disappear beyond the shrubbery. She saw his head as he swung down the path toward the house. And when she had seen that, feeling that there

was one secure moment, she dropped to the stone bench, catching a great breath. Her lips were stinging. Her whole body was hot with shame and joy commingled. Tears began to roll down her face. But all at once she threw up her hands toward the placid, bright moon and broke into a silent laughter.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE GLOBE OF MYSTERY.

WHEN she sat in her room, afterward, she looked back upon that evening as upon a long course of years. The girl who had jested with her father and mocked her mother as they sat under the pergola seemed hardly related to her. One great event had made all that went before a part of the dead past.

What most worried her was the parting. For she was half tormented and half delighted by the memory of it. She had at least made him take her seriously. Therein lay the triumph. He had begun a careless flirtation. He had ended shocked into a new consideration of her.

But was he not so thoroughly baffled and chilled that he would indeed leave the house in the morning as he had promised? Perhaps she had succeeded too well, and this was a Pyrrhic victory. Suddenly the room became too small for her. She had to have a greater space about her, some place to walk and to ponder. She might go down to the living room. The rest of the house was long since in bed.

So she threw on a dressing gown and went down. But the black forms of the furniture in the living room were to her like so many observing figures of men. She went to the front door. The garden was glistening under the moon. The wind moved hardly at all. And the air was soft and warm. She stepped down to the path.

There would be at least one sleepless person in the great house that night, and that was her father. Half in pity for him and half in mirth she smiled and shrugged her shoulders. But for that matter, why should she not pity and tremble for herself? For she was drawn on toward an undiscoverable

end. Rehearsing all that had happened, she was convinced that her own rash threat had been her undoing. Her vow that she would marry the first man to walk through the gate had opened her mind to him. Without that, no doubt he would have remained only a stranger.

Full of that thought she went on slowly down the path, until a glimmer of light across the window of the library made her raise her head. She had to look again before she saw that this was strange. It was as though some one had turned the electric current through a globe which was burned out. There was that one flash and then no more light.

Curious, she stepped to the side of the house and looked in. In the farther corner she saw the great steel globe of Commodore Dascom, the great inlaid globe on the surface of which he had been wont to trace his journeys and locate the sites of his adventures. Over the globe leaned the figure of a man. He held a pocket electric torch in the one hand. The other was pressed upon the surface of the globe, which he appeared to be searching inch by inch, with the most patient scrutiny.

And Samuel Chester Logan, why had he, also, been turning the globe and studying it while he listened to the talk of her father?

In her interest, she moved a little closer, her foot caught on a stone, and she stumbled, only saving herself by throwing out a hand which struck sharply against the lower part of the window pane.

That noise caused the man at the globe to spring erect, while, as he turned toward the sound, the electric torch flashed one gleam of light across his face and she saw that it was John Hodge, his teeth clenched, his eyes glittering with a savage ferocity. Then the light was out, but she could hear the swift footsteps crossing the room.

She turned to flee, but a nightmare weakness numbed her limbs. All the strength was gone from her knees. She crossed the path which rounded the side of the house and reached the farther side of a border of shrubs. But there all power failed her. She dropped to the ground, drew the gown close about her, and waited in dread.

The window was raised softly. There followed the soft thud as some one sprang down and landed on the garden mold between the walk and the wall of the house. Then a step crunched on the path. She looked up in speechless terror. She could clearly see the dark outline of his tall figure. Could he see her, lying as she did under the shadow of the shrubs? Would he dream that she had dared remain so close? By the turning of his head it seemed that he was looking far off, but all the time he might be well aware that she was there. He might be reserving his knowledge for some mysterious and terrible purpose. Or what would he do if he discovered her?

Nothing seemed too much to expect. The possibilities of his action were limitless. If a blow would assure him of her silence until his purpose in the room were fulfilled—even that was not too much to expect.

The shadow of John Hodge withdrew, melted back into the steep shade of the house. She heard him scramble back through the window. But even then she waited for deadly minutes before she dared to stir. At length she went slowly on hands and knees under the shelter of the shrubs until she had covered a considerable distance to the corner of the house. Then she rose and peered about her. The façade of the building was gilded white by the moonlight. The windows of the library which looked to the front of the mansion were black and empty of light. Nothing could be more quiet, more innocent than the appearance of the building.

But in it was John Hodge, aware that he had been spied upon and, apparently, ready to strike down the spy with a summary violence. How should she be sure of crossing the gap between the hedging shrubs and the house in safety? Or should she scream, and thereby rouse the house?

It was useless to do that, she knew. Or, if not useless, it would be shameful. There would be an outpouring of people, and before they had secured her and brought her in, John Hodge could be safely in his bed. Or, if he preferred, he could be far from the house. As for the tall figure which she had seen bending over the steel globe of the commodore, it would be laughed at. They



would doubtless tell her that she had walked in her sleep.

As for the globe itself, she combed her mind to recall all that she had ever heard of it. She only knew that it had been made to order for the commodore and that he had carried it on his travels in the cabin of his yacht. It had been so close a companion of his talks, indeed, that its name had been among the last words the hardy old sailor uttered.

"Globe — Madras — Calcutta — Singapore—" he had said, and died on that word. Colorful names from his travels in the East had crowded into his mind at the last, together with the mention of the globe.

But why this globe should call for so much attention from the stranger of the tawny hair and midnight visits from John Hodge she could not tell. That mere chance had caused her to find both Logan and the historian examining it was too much for even a child to believe. But how could they have been attracted to the globe? Certainly, she decided, although John Hodge might have come with purpose to examine the steel globe, and although all his talk linking the Red Captain with Hal-lyt might be false, yet Logan and the man of the South Seas had certainly come to the house only by chance. It seemed, therefore, that there must be something about the globe which was attractive to certain eyes, although others saw nothing in it.

Of one thing at least she was sure—and that was that she could never be happy until she had examined that globe—and at once! It would take courage to go into that room while John Hodge might still be there conducting his explorations in the dark, but if she did not follow her impulse, she knew that she would regret it with all of her inquisitive soul to the day of her death.

She decided to make the break for the house, no matter what eyes might see her run through the wall of moonlight before she reached the shadow. Accordingly, she rose, and running with all her might, she scurried up the front steps and into the darkness of the great main hall of the building.

There, pausing and controlling her panting, she discovered that the house was full

of an intricate system of murmurs and half-heard whispers. The place had seemed utterly silent when she first came down, but now terror had so sharpened her ears that it seemed to her guilty voices were muttering up and down the hall; and there were faint squeaks as of men running up and down the stairs.

She went slowly, slowly up the hall. For she was prepared for flight either ahead or in retreat at the first really distinct sound. She reached the great dark stairs in safety. Somewhere to the side one dim globe was burning, but it cast only a faint, reddish light that filled the hallway with shadows. Up she went, step by step, but halfway to the top there was something like a catching of breath just behind her.

She glanced back and down in mortal terror. There was nothing but empty space below her, but when she looked ahead again it seemed that there was a terrible foe rushing up on her from behind. All control left her. She fled as fast as her trembling legs would carry her up the stairs to the hall above.

When she reached the level, her head spinning with fear and her heart thundering, some of her courage returned. She leaned an instant against the wall, gasping to win back her breath. Then, making sure that the stairs below were still utterly empty, she went on down the hall.

But one burst of fear had unnerved her completely. She was ready to scream at the first imaginary movement of a shadow around her. But when something concrete actually took shape, she was too paralyzed to make a sound.

She had turned the corner where the hallway split in two parts at the rear of the house, and as she did so, the shadowy figure of a man loomed up, walking just before her. Half fainting, she caught in her breath, and that noise was sufficient to make the other whirl upon her.

"Who's there?" snarled a familiar voice. "Who's walking there?"

There was a glimmer of metal in his hand. The form drew closer. The hand of her father fell upon her shoulder!

In the same instant he recognized her.

"What on earth is this, Olivetta?" he

asked, with a more unmasked anger than she had ever seen in him before. "What are you up to now, stealing around the house like a ghost?"

"Not like a ghost," breathed Olivetta, "but *seeing* ghosts!"

There was an exclamation from Hugh Dascom.

"What do you mean by that, child? Come in here with me!"

He drew her to the side into a little upper study which was his favorite room and switched on a light.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OLIVETTA PREPARES.

HE was dressed in tweed, knickerbockers and heavy walking shoes. One pocket of the coat bulged with the gun which he had just dropped into it.

In that one respect he possessed qualifications as an outdoors, even as a sporting man: he practiced assiduously with a revolver and he was inordinately vain of his prowess with that weapon. He prized the accomplishment not because a gun was of much use to him as a hunting weapon, but taken in combination with the rest of his rather unmuscular characteristics, his skill with a gun provided a pleasant contrast. Hardy men of the outdoors who had spent the morning bragging of the deeds in the saddle or with rod and line, quite contemptuous of dainty Hugh Dascom, were apt to be taken all aback when they saw him produce a revolver and blow the head from a squirrel twenty-five yards away. For such reasons he prided himself on his use of the gun. And although he fired not ten rounds a year at living game, he shot off pound upon pound of ammunition in practice upon his targets.

Olivetta had always felt that she understood exactly why her father used a gun so much and she had somewhat despised him for it. But now, more or less in spite of herself, that bulge in his pocket thrilled her. It endowed him with a new manliness. And, indeed, there was something about his coolness which made him seem wonderfully strong. Though, of course, he could

not know what she had seen and heard in the past few moments. In the meantime, he was surveying her with a curious attention.

"Damned insomnia got me up for a stroll," he said. "But I say, Olivetta, you mustn't prance around the house like this at all hours of the night! Where the deuce have you been?"

The whole truth trembled upon the tip of her tongue. But when she was about to speak it seemed to her that all of her adventure boiled down to a beggarly small bit. John Hodge, out for a walk like others in that household that night, had stepped into the library. Not wishing to disturb others with a flare of all the lights thrown on from the switch, he had taken his pocket torch and with it gone to the globe to locate some point of interest. While he leaned over it, he had been startled by a sound at the window. He had glanced in that direction. He had seen a figure disappearing, so he thought, from before it. He had rushed to examine, leaped out to the garden below, but there he had found that there was no one in sight.

After all, what could be more coherent, more easily defensible than such a statement? And as she ran over the details, Olivetta herself was half convinced. She saw that she must not tell what she had seen, and what deductions she had drawn from what she had seen. So she shrugged her shoulders and managed a tolerably successful smile.

"I don't suppose this is just the costume for a midnight stroll," she admitted. "But you know I have your own trouble. The same insomnia kept me awake. I got up—went for a stroll—and that's all there is to it!"

She laughed rather breathlessly. Hugh Dascom was lighting a cigarette. When he looked up to her, she saw that he did not believe a word he had heard. He avowed it frankly.

"Olivetta," he said, "I see that you have a great and growing talent for telling fibs. Let me have the truth about this night walking of yours, will you?"

He was so quiet, so absurdly unlike the average pompous parent, that her heart



went out to him in an unwonted fashion. Again she was on the verge of a confession, and again something restrained her.

"The truth is," she said, "that when I was coming in I thought I heard something behind me, and that big, shadowy hall—"

"Olivetta, upon my soul you were afraid and ran from the dark!"

"Exactly," she said. "And now you'll make my life miserable for a month about it!"

"On my honor," he replied, "I'll say not a word. I hate the infernal dark myself. I have only sympathy for you, my dear. Not a word about this from me!"

"Dad," she said, "you're a darling!"

"Only," he went on, "you'll have to promise to take a bit better care of yourself. Nightgowns are made of stuff too thin for the night wind. You see?"

She promised with a smile. She was about to go, but still she delayed a moment. Something kept her back like a restraining hand.

"Dad," she said, "there's something more than insomnia that's started you walking about to-night."

"What makes you think so? Isn't that reason enough?"

"I mean—you have worries that have kept you awake?"

"Naturally," said Hugh Dascom. "If you think back a little you may even be able to guess what the most important of them is."

At this she flushed. But he went on smoking quietly, seeming to pay more attention to the enjoyment of his cigarette than to her.

"It was because you seemed to count on me as—as—"

"As a business investment?" said her father. "Perhaps I talked that way. That's because I'm frank. I'm in a corner. I hope that there will be found a way out. And the one source of money which I can trust to is the income of your husband-to-be. Do you see? As for treating you so commercially—why, Olivetta, I suspect that you yourself have rarely looked upon the romantic side of marriage!"

His assurance piqued her.

"You think that I have been a fortune hunter, frankly, from the start?"

"Something like that."

"We're about to quarrel again," said Olivetta. "I can see that."

"Impossible," said her father. "I never quarrel with any one. It is your right to marry whom you please. But I refuse to argue with you on the point. You know my wish. If that cannot be made to coincide with your own wishes, then we drop the discussion, if you please, and pass on to others which are more pleasant. Is that clear, Olivetta?"

"And there is no hard feeling on your side?"

"On mine? None in the world!"

"Yet you are worried?"

"About money, not about you, my dear," he answered.

She stepped back with a sigh. The smoke from his cigarette was rising slowly before his face. It shut her away from him. More and more she came to understand that there was little of either love or hate in him. She would rather have had him storm at her, by far, than meet with this utter indifference. She half guessed at something better than indifference behind the veil, so to speak. But it was not a guess which she could put into words. But out of this interview with her father she had learned at least one new thing about him, and this was that, under the softness of his exterior, there was concealed a pride as strong and stern as iron.

"If I could change—" she began.

He raised a hand to halt her.

"Hush!" he said. "I cannot allow you to forget that you have pledged yourself to marry a very definite man, Olivetta. The historian, Mr. Hodge. You must not forget him, my dear!"

He spoke with a singular smile.

"You don't like him? What have you found out about him?" she asked.

"I've found that he has an income of exactly what he can make by his writing."

"What of that? Many writers make fine fat incomes, dad, don't they?"

"Not historians, I believe," he answered.

Olivetta shrugged her shoulders.

"It doesn't matter," she said.

"Of course," he agreed politely. "Love is the thing. That's what a marriage should be built upon—love or, next best, a bet or a vow taken on the instant. I wish you the best of good luck with him, my dear."

"Dad—" she began, but her voice was so low that he did not hear her.

"Sit down in here," he said. "You rarely come into my room. But there's a comfortable chair. And yonder are a number of books—not fiction, I confess, but some which are really better than fiction, I think. Here is a favorite of mine—Machiavelli's History of Florence. And next to it is a greater favorite—Benvenuto Cellini, that prince of princely liars. Or here is Maundeville to set you chuckling and, in good time, get you ready for bed and a sound sleep. Good night, my dear!"

He kissed her forehead and went out, closing the door softly behind him.

As for Olivetta, she waited until his footsteps had padded away to silence on the thick rug of the hall. Then she dropped into the chair which he had pointed out to her. In the last two minutes of that talk with her father she felt that he had come wonderfully near to her, far nearer than he had ever been before. She had suspected, almost scorned him. But now there was a queer mixture of pity and admiration for him. For she was beginning to feel that there was more strength in him than she had ever suspected.

And as for her marriage with money, was he not justified in expecting that she had planned only for a comfortable union? Her careless life, her frolic habits with men, her light-hearted chatter about the youngsters she knew—out of this he might well have drawn stinging deductions.

What could she do to help him?

She resolved that when the morning came she would have a new and serious talk with him out of which they should both come with a better understanding, a new respect for each other. But in the meantime the moment she was left alone what had seemed too unimportant to tell her father became real again to her. And this was the mystery clinging to the steel globe of Commodore Dascom. She went straight from her father's study to her own room. There she

opened the drawer in which she kept the revolver which he had always insisted upon her owning and which he had patiently taught her to use in the old days.

It was in perfect working order. She looked carefully to it, and when she was sure that it was in fighting trim, she donned stockings and shoes instead of slippers, rolled up the sleeves of her dressing gown, drew the belt tighter about her waist, and then stepped out into the solemn darkness of the great hall prepared to investigate.

## CHAPTER IX.

### WHO?

THE effect of a gun butt touching the palm of her hand was like the turning on of a great light which flooded the house. She walked with steady nerves and a firm step down the hall and into the library below. And in that great room the space, the murmurs of the wind which had risen and which was now stirring in the chimney, hardly troubled her at all.

John Hodge was not there. What if he had been? Or what if any man had been? She could shout for help and that shout would bring—whom?

Certainly not the servants on the third floor. No, it would not bring any of those to her help. And in the rest of the house there were Logan and his retainer, the man, Louis Kern, and her father and John Hodge himself. Three strangers under the roof, and her father out walking in the night. Whom, then, could her cry of alarm reach?

This thought cooled her courage considerably. And though she gripped the revolver tight with no unpracticed hand and went firmly across the room, yet she would have been heartily glad if the ravening curiosity within had not driven her on.

There was no light near the globe. She switched on a reading lamp and rolled the globe—the heavy sphere was poised on a wheeled stand—into the illumined circle. Then she sat down with her back to the wall to examine the globe in detail.

Even though she brought a fortified and resolute curiosity to bear, she could make but small headway. It seemed just as it



had always seemed to her—a very expensive toy. The enameling, to be sure, was beautifully done. And the steel was so cunningly welded together that it seemed as smooth as blown glass. The map was somewhat out of date, but it was as clear in every detail, in every printed word, as on the day when the enamel was first applied to the metal.

And again doubts assailed her.

It was sufficiently curious, this globe, to call for special attention. To her it was a mere nothing. Commodore Dascom had had one fondness for one among his relations, and that was for her. And she had been accustomed to seeing that globe in the commodore's cabin when she was a mere child. She had taken it entirely for granted from the first. But others, seeing it for the first time, would find it an odd work, to be sure.

She rapped the steel with her knuckles. The dull and muffled sound which replied proved the thickness of the layer of steel. She turned the globe with a jerk of the wrist—it spun smoothly upon its bearings.

Then, slowing the revolutions, she so turned it that her eye could travel easily from one to the other of Madras—Calcutta—Singapore. And as she thought of those last words of the dying commodore, and when she saw them in their places on the map in the distant Orient, a chill traveled eagerly through her blood.

She sat back in her chair and looked around the room. The massive furniture stood each piece in its place—so large and so massive, indeed, that a dozen men could have been concealed when she entered the room—could have remained concealed all the time she was in it!

But at this point, just as panic was beginning to swell in her, she assured herself that she was playing the part of a very foolish girl. A fresh grip on the butt of the revolver, continued until the muscles of her hand ached, helped to reassure her. And then, picking out the names one by one with her fingers simply for the sake of something to occupy her until her nerves were better, she found the cities one by one—Madras, Calcutta, Singapore.

As her index finger of the right hand

descended on that point, the other two cities remaining similarly covered, she felt a sudden slip of the steel, which immediately quivered back.

She jerked her hand away as though it were lying on a bomb. She sprang up from the chair, and as she did so, it seemed to her that something moved on the outside of the French doors at the farther end of the room.

With great eyes she stared. But there was no other motion of the shadow which she thought she had seen. And she settled back in her chair to examine the globe again. In rising she had spun it around and when she looked again at the triangle embraced by the three points which the commodore had named, she found the enameled surface of the steel as solid as ever. There was no crack of the diameter of a hair's breadth.

Again she touched the cities, one by one, keeping a finger upon each while she pressed on the next. And this time, as she touched Singapore again, the slab of metal slipped out into her hands, a perfect triangular section revealed the black hollow of the interior of the globe!

Olivetta, gripping the gun tight, peered once more around the room. But the perfect silence had spread around her. Then she drew the globe back until the light from the reading lamp flooded the interior.

It was by no means hollow. A number of strong steel braces went crisscross from surface to surface, and where they passed one another near the center was a sort of pocket of a green felt. She fumbled in it. It was empty to the bottom, a flap cover being unbuttoned.

It was an empty mystery, then, which she had discovered. She replaced the curved triangle, and when she pressed on the three cities, the dexterously hidden springs admitted the notch back into the whole.

She rose from her chair wonderfully relieved and yet strangely excited. And as she was about to go back to her room, her eye caught on a bit of glistening silk on the floor. She picked it up. There was no mistaking it. It was plainly a lining fitted to that pocket of green felt which she had found in the center of the globe.

There was another face put upon the matter at once. Another meaning was given to the curious attention which Logan first and John Hodge in the second place had lavished upon the globe. One of them, or both of them working in unison, had succeeded in opening the globe, it seemed, and had extracted the contents of that cunningly hidden pocket. And a thing which the old commodore saw fit to hide in this fashion must have been of some value.

She crumbled and then anxiously smoothed out the silk pocket which she held. She turned it inside out. But there was no making which could give a clew to what the contents might once have been.

She stuffed it, finally, into the pocket in her dressing gown and crossed the room again. Obviously she must make a report of her discovery to some one, but who that some one could be there was no means of telling. Her father was gone. And poor Mrs. Dascom would probably be reduced to the verge of hysteria if such a tale were poured into her ears. Olivetta, walking thoughtfully and, like all people in thought, with her head slightly inclined to the floor, had stepped into the hall when something like the soft stirring wing of a moth waved down noiselessly before her face.

She raised her hand too late to strike it away. It sank tight and strong about nose and mouth. It stifled the scream she strove to utter. She was borne back upon the floor, twisted upon her face, and held there by a crushing strength and weight until the gag had been adjusted and her hands tied behind her back.

That done, nimble fingers began searching every crevice of her clothes. Some one, then, had watched her at work on the globe and had seen her take the section away. They were working now to gain the profits from what she might have found. As the search progressed fruitlessly, he who had attacked her began to curse in a whisper—but the words and the voice could not be recognized—there was only the light, hissing sound.

Suddenly the search stopped.

"Don't move!" said a whisper beside her very ear, and at the same time something with a needle point pricked into the flesh

of her back. In the meantime steps came slowly down the stairs from the upper hall. Muffled by the carpet, it was an almost indistinguishable beating sound that she heard come toward them. And now the heel was tapping lightly on the floor of the hall. Some one was sauntering slowly past while she lay there in the corner, only half concealed, surely, by the shadow. Any breathing sound would reveal her. And yet no sound was made. And the step went past them and disappeared, wakening a wider and fainter echo on the steps beyond the front door.

She was now released from the weight which had crushed her to the floor. She was raised, swung upon a broad shoulder, and carried with amazing lightness and speed down the hall. Of one thing at least she could be sure, if she were ever given an opportunity to detect her assailant—he was a man with very broad, bony shoulders and possessed of the greatest strength.

Would not that description perfectly fit John Hodge?

The first cold frenzy of fear was subsiding. She was beginning to be able to think and act, but before she could frame a plan, or effectually struggle, he who bore her paused, opened a door, and cast her down violently into a closet. She was pressed against the flat boards before her. The door closed with a jar behind her, and she heard the turning of a lock which was quiet assurance that she could not easily escape.

## CHAPTER X.

### A BARGAIN WITH HODGE.

TIME was measured for a while, in the progressing ache of the muscles of her arms and hands where the cord of him who had bound her began to eat into the flesh. It seemed to her a round hour before the lock turned quickly in the door again and, as the door was opened, she tumbled out and was caught in the arms of a man who exclaimed in astonishment.

In an instant the bandage and the gag were removed. She could see, breathe, speak. Then the touch of a knife freed



her hands. She found herself standing before the unmistakable long outlines of John Hodge.

"Ah!" cried Olivetta. "How have you dared—"

"Dared what?" he asked her.

But she had already paused. Of what, definitely, could she accuse him?

"How did you know that I was here?" she asked.

"I thought I saw this door open as I came in from the garden. Good gad, what's it all about? What the deuce is happening in this house?"

"And you haven't the slightest idea?" said Olivetta, straining her eyes at him through the darkness.

"What are we waiting for?" asked John Hodge. "Why don't we rouse the house and—"

"Because there's no one in the house to rouse," said Olivetta, "except some girls and a few old men who'd die of fright if they saw danger."

"This isn't a practical joke, then?"

She was amazed by her own calm, her easy self-assurance. She felt, in the darkness, how completely she dominated him. It was not that she no longer suspected him. But suspecting him as she did, she no longer feared him.

"Will you go to the telephone and ring the police?"

"Certainly. You think that raising the house—"

"Would simply confuse everything and every one."

"What a gamester you are!" breathed John Hodge.

And he hurried down the hall and stepped into the little telephone booth.

He came out again almost at once. She had switched on a light, in the meantime, and now she saw that he was fully dressed. His step on the floor was made utterly noiseless by some sort of rubber soles and heels. And she noted swiftly that his shoulders were indeed broad and lean, and there was a suggestion of an ample power in his long body. He very easily could have swung her up and carried her. The probability that he had done so was made greater because he had known that she was in the

closet. At least a full ten minutes had elapsed since she was put in it and how could he have seen the closing of the door upon her?

"The telephone wires are cut," he announced, with no excitement showing in his voice.

He stood anxiously before her.

"Do you know more than you are letting me understand?" he asked. "Is there some secret reason why all this makes so little difference to you?"

"What makes you think it makes little difference to me?"

"You're cool as steel."

"It would do no good to raise the house about it. There's no one here who could help."

All the time that she talked she was wondering to herself if he had told the truth about the wires being cut. But it seemed that to discover him in such a lie would be too simple a matter. No, he would not have risked that.

"There you are!" he was saying. "How many girls would have paused to think that out? Mighty few!"

There was such a ring of honest enthusiasm in his voice that again she felt half convinced that she should believe him.

"But there's some sort of a shadow on me in your eyes," he was saying. "Will you tell me what's wrong? What is it you blame me for—or is it just that wretched blunder I made in the garden this evening? I admit that was bad enough, but surely—"

"I only wonder," she said frankly, skipping his reference, "I only wonder how it is that you could have known that I was thrown into this closet without coming sooner—"

"But I didn't know. Mind you, I was looking in from the moonlight in front of the house, into this dark hall. And it seemed to me that I saw a door fly open and something passed through the door. But on my honor it was only a half guess, looking down among the shadows as I was then. I came in a minute later and went up to my room.

"It was not until after I was there that I began to see that things were a little suspicious—it was not until I sat in my room

that I was actually sure that a door had opened and that some one had passed through it. Don't you know how it may be? Retrospect clears up one's mind, you know! Suddenly I knew that there was mischief abroad! I came hurrying down—and there I found you!”

“You even guessed the exact door?”

“I tried that door yonder into the living room. I flashed a pocket torch I have around in it. Everything seemed well enough. Then I came down the hall and opened this door. But—you surely believe me?”

She looked wistfully into his lean, ugly face. It seemed that even then, serious and even anxious as his words were, there was a mocking devil behind his eyes smirking out at her. She thrust her hand back into the pocket of her dressing gown. It was strange that her assailant had not chosen to remove the weapon which she carried. Now it was a double blessing. She took a firm hold on it. And while she struggled to see the truth in what John Hodge was telling her, she was ready to loose a stream of lead at him at the first provocation.

“I'm trying to believe you,” she said gravely.

Another picture swept across her mind, of the wicked, the cruel face of John Hodge turned toward her when she had surprised him in the library. And her eyes widened as she spoke.

“It's that cursed garden and what happened there,” he said ruefully. “Good gad, I don't blame you! You have reason enough for thinking anything that comes into your head, I suppose. Except that you were so wonderfully self-contained and so dignified—so strongly controlled, d'you see?—that I thought you might think it all over afterward and see how the moonshine and the fragrance of the flowers and the time of the evening went to my head and made a fool out of me—I had been hoping that you would see all those things and understand how profoundly shamed I am.”

She raised a hand to stop him. More words were coming, a flood of them. But he bit his lip and kept back.

“I'm not thinking about that,” she said. “It's quite another thing.”

“Something I've done later?” he asked.

It was hard to disbelieve in the sincerity which ruled him now. His frown was the height of contriteness and dismay.

“The library,” she said suddenly, unable to contain it any longer. “What were you doing in there?”

“Good God!” breathed John Hodge. “It was you? You were there? At the window?”

He made a motion to come closer. She jerked the gun out of her pocket.

“Stay where you are!” she whispered savagely. “You may be telling the truth or you may be telling a great lie. But I'm not going to trust to your word. I don't dare. I'm going back to my room and there—I tell you, don't come nearer to me! I have this gun, and my father has taught me how to use it very well. I tell you upon my honor, John Hodge, that at a time like this I should not hesitate—”

Suddenly he shrugged his shoulders and stepped back with a peculiar smile.

“You would actually shoot?” he said, and she sensed a polite scorn in his tone.

“I would,” she said, and she pushed out the gun so that it gleamed in the light. “John Hodge,” she went on, “or whatever your name—”

“No, no!” exclaimed John Hodge. “You are surely not going to say that? You are surely not going to accuse me of coming here under a *nom de plume*?”

She paused. She was trembling with the conflict of wills in her.

“That's really too silly,” said John Hodge with open contempt. “Excuse me for the word, but there's no other that fits. You mustn't let such romantic ideas fly away with that good common sense of yours. If you please!”

He abashed her as a teacher might have abashed her in her school days.

“And as for the gun,” he said, “why, that will not really tie a man's hands!”

He stepped closer.

“On my honor,” she gasped, “I warn you!”

“I thank you for the warning,” said John Hodge.

He came still closer. The muzzle of the gun struck against his breast. It seemed



to her that the steel pushed through his clothes, and that she could feel the pulse of his heart. And in her forefinger there was quivering a sufficient power to snap the thread of that strong life and send it flying away faster than the bullet that killed him. She had come within the dizzy verge of shooting, and this magnificent and foolish courage appalled her.

"It really won't do," said John Hodge. "People aren't shot down in cold blood, you know, by charming ladies. I don't know what manner of men you've been living near that you could attempt to work such a bluff. Please put up that revolver!"

She obeyed. She dropped the weapon into the pocket of her gown, and at the same time she cried feebly: "Oh, what a silly idiot I've been!"

"Do you want me to go on and explain the library scene?" he said.

"No. Don't say a word."

"You've stopped doubting me?"

Indeed, it seemed as though a blinding light had been thrown upon him by this last singular act of recklessness. It did not matter in what strange position or compromising act she had seen him. A man capable of such bravery was certainly incapable of knavery of any kind.

"I've stopped doubting!" she said miserably. "I feel as though I'd made a wonderful fool of myself!"

"Suppose we strike a bargain."

"About what?"

"Why, suppose that you agree to forget everything that has happened in the first part of the evening, and I'll agree to forget everything that has happened later on. Is that fair to us both?"

"More than fair," said Olivetta.

"And you *will* forget?"

"Yes," she whispered.

He had not drawn back from her. Now he seemed to be leaning, and his shadow enveloping her, so to speak. She was bound by a peculiar influence which she had never felt before, saving in the garden that same evening. A strange commingling of fear and happiness worked together in her. And that peculiar ugly face worked on her, fascinated her.

Suddenly he stepped back.

"I have learned one great lesson," he said. And then, in a different voice: "I think that you're quite right. It would be useless to raise the house. Whoever attacked you—"

He paused.

"Did it because he thought that—that I carried something of value on me. They searched me and then ran away. And—"

He had started, but now he nodded in the most reassuring manner.

"An excellent antidote for these midnight scares is five minutes of morning sunlight. Suppose that you wait till sunup. And then, if you're still awake, we'll get together and try to solve the mystery. Will that suit you?"

"Do you think that is best?"

"Frankly, I do."

It was an immense relief to transfer the burden of making the decision.

"Good night, then," said Olivetta.

"Good night," said John Hodge.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE MAN IN THE DARK.

AND yet, even as she turned away, it seemed to her that the face of John Hodge changed from its courtesy, changed from its eagerness. There was a flash of the same old sardonic mirth which she had marked in him before, and with it there rushed over her the sense of shame—the feeling that she had been mocked.

She went up the stairs slowly, pausing two or three times, and once actually turning around. He was standing exactly as she had left him, with his head bowed a trifle as though he were still looking down on her; his chin was dropped upon the supporting fingers of one hand; nothing could have increased that picture of intense thoughtfulness.

This was the last she saw of him before she turned into the darkness of the upper hall. Once there, she hurried at full speed. In her room, she switched on the light, as before, and went to her window. There she sat for a time, staring into the night, rehearsing with jumping nerves all she had heard or seen. But by degrees a calmer

mood succeeded. The rustling of the wind among the potted plants along the balcony quieted her. And finally she opened the bed and slipped between the sheets.

She expected to lie awake until dawn. But in a few moments waves of weariness began to sweep over her body and break upon her mind. Then the sea of drowsiness was broken up by a faint noise at the window.

She listened, wide awake but unconcerned. What could trouble her in the way of alarms after what she had been through? Moreover, she was filled with a placid satisfaction at the thought of the astonished faces in the morning when she told her story, with John Hodge present to corroborate all the important points. They would wonder at the steadiness which had enabled her to keep the alarm until the morning.

Suddenly all thought of the morning to come vanished from her mind. The light noise at the window, like a scratching against the woodwork, was followed, after the slightest interval, by a faint thud against the floor. It was hardly a sound; it was rather a vibration that came dimly but distinctly to the bed.

She was cautious enough not to sit up in bed and make a noise in so doing. She merely lifted her head, and against the rectangle of the window she saw the outline of a clearly defined man's body! And the revolver remained in her dressing gown on the back of a chair at the farther side of the room.

In the moment of waiting that followed she wondered first of all at the motionless figure of the man. For what was he waiting? And then she realized that he was waiting simply to make sure that the noise of his coming had not disturbed her.

A light click and a flash of light. She closed her eyes. She summoned the last scruple of her courage and was able to smile faintly in her sleep. Full on her face struck the light of the electric torch. Then that light flicked away. She opened her eyes.

The room was black again. The silhouette of the man was gone from the window. In the farther corner beside her bureau it seemed to her that she could

make out his figure again, however, but all was indistinct—shadow within shadow.

There was not the least sound, whatever it was that employed the man. But presently the electric torch was snapped on again. It cast a flush of light across the top of the bureau. In that brilliancy she could see agile, active hands at work. He seemed to be lifting and turning everything he saw. Then he abandoned the top of the bureau and began to search in the top drawers.

What on earth could he be seeking? But there was the emerald!

At the thought of that long, slender, oblong jewel which Commodore Dascom had given her, a thrill of anguish ran through her heart. She would almost rather risk death than the loss of that. Now she marked the far corner of the room where her dressing gown was a sloping shadow thrown over the chair. How long would it take her to throw the covers back, spring for the robe, find the gun, and attack the invader with it? And would she indeed succumb to the wild temptation to make that attack?

As for the robber, he could quietly turn the shaft of his light upon her, shoot her dead, and flee through the balcony and down from the balcony to the ground.

Anxiously she watched the progress of those busy hands at the drawers, and then the light caught and glimmered upon a metal box. Yes, he had found the box of the emerald, indeed! And the sight of it snapped whatever caution still restrained her.

She drew the bed cover noiselessly loose at the foot of the bed, and secured an ample hold on a corner of it. In the meantime the little box had been unlocked, and as the robber lifted the lid she sprang out of bed and threw the spread toward the head of the stranger, at the same time running for the chair which contained her robe and the gun in it.

Luck favored that cast of the bed cover. The burglar, wheeling at the first sound, had bolted for the opened window, but as he ran the big cloth dropped over his head and brought an exclamation of rage and fear from his lips.



He had worked free from it and cast it—a shapeless, flopping thing—to the floor, as Olivetta, the gun in her hand, whirled toward the window. There was no time to take careful aim. He was already framed in the window, in the very act of leaping onto the balcony, and Olivetta pressed the trigger.

The report seemed to knock the feet from under the stranger. His legs buckled. He pitched back onto the floor of the room, and Olivetta, with a scream of terror, fled for the door.

She ran into the arms of John Hodge just outside.

"Burglar!" gasped Olivetta. "Oh—"

"Let me get at this," said John Hodge in an entirely matter-of-fact voice. "Keep out, if you please. Or give a yell or two to rouse the rest of 'em!"

She saw a great forty-five, looking as big as a small cannon, gleaming in his hand as he stepped through the door. This was the weapon, then, for which he had instinctively reached when it was suggested that a gun be fired to warn the sloop of her danger in Hallyt's Cove.

In the meantime there was a banging of doors, a scampering of many feet, and

shouts on shouts up and down the length of the house. Olivetta, shrinking from the unbroken blackness of the hall, shrank back into her room at the back of John Hodge.

A sprawling figure was working toward the window. A gun spat fire twice. Two bullets crashed into the woodwork above her head.

"You dog!" snarled John Hodge.

And he ducked and ran squarely at the robber.

Even in the confusion of mind that went with that wild hour it seemed to Olivetta an uncharacteristic, wild thing for him to do. It would have been more in character for him to open fire with that monstrous Colt which he carried.

She herself rushed for the switch and turned it on. When she looked again she saw the two men entangled for one brief instant on the floor. The weapon was knocked spinning out of the hand of the burglar. An instant later he was dragged to a sitting posture with the hand of John Hodge at his collar and the gun of John Hodge jammed against his breast.

"No tricks now!" Hodge was saying.

Olivetta found herself looking into the face of Samuel Chester Logan!

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



## BUCK UP

C'MON, you—buck up!

Don't let thet guy beat yer sellin'.

E-l-u-c-i-d-a-t-e.

Show yer gift 'f gab;

Git yer customer—

Git 'im!

Don't let 'im get erway.

Wake up!

Show 'im—tell 'im—

Hold 'im—sell 'im—

Thatter way!

Success ain't no esc'lator,

An' yer gotter clim' er ladder—*up!*

Don't tell 'im—*sell* 'im.

Shove out—broaden;

Know yer goods—breathe deep—

Ye're livin', ain't yer?

C'mon, you—buck up!

Jack Hyatt, Jr.



# Kicking Tom McGee

By ARTHUR HUNT CHUTE

SATURDAY afternoon, Water Street crowded, but out of all the jostling longshore mob he stood forth, an integer in the midst of vulgar fractions.

With more than passing interest Burke regarded his countenance, swollen, reddish, marked with a hard, almost brutal expression. Then, with a glimpse of the pale fanatical light of his eye, Burke felt his own heart flutter, for by that sign he knew that it was Kicking Tom McGee.

Head and shoulders over all the rest, he moved, erect and dominant. Even in that sailor town, that never knew politeness, instinctively they gave before him.

Bolder to his back than to his face, Burke cursed aloud at the retreating figure.

"Still acts as if ye owned the whole o' God'imighty's earth. But by the leapin' cripes, I'll fix ye yet, ye blasted Bluenose bully!"

If this had been an ordinary grudge, Burke would have said to Barney Ugate, "Get that guy," and that would have been the end of it.

Captain Tom McGee, otherwise Kicking Tom, had not been in a home port of Nova Scotia for many years. Some said he dared not return, but now he came openly and bold.

Water Street, at his reappearance, was agog with rumors; the Bluenose Bucko was famous the world over as an unholy driver, but even among such Bully McGee stood forth preëminent. His footwork was the attribute that touched him with grisly horror. As Burke observed: "He could kick the plaster out of a nine-foot ceilin', and just as aisy he could kick the slats out of an ungodly crew."

Captain McGee's ship, the Orion, lay alongside at Deepwater, deserted almost as soon as she made fast, foremast hands not even waiting for pay, in their impatience to be off.

The reputation of the Orion as a hell packet went before her; in consequence she was shunned like a plague by free-will seamen.

But there were other ways to obtain a



crew besides signing them on by their own free will. Halifax at that time was one of the premier shanghai ports of the world, a fact commemorated in the Sailor's Litany by that prayer:

While on the sea I be,  
From Hull, hell, and Halifax,  
Good God, deliver me.

It was a notorious fact that if a man happened into Water Street who had no business there, he was liable to do the vanishing act, and to remain on the missing list until weeks or months later he spoke from some undreamed foreign port.

There were two famous crimp houses on Water Street—the Alhambra and the Rialto. Each of these had a bar situated conveniently toward the end of the pier. By means of a hatchway in the floor, it was a simple matter to lower the inebriate into a waiting boat and whisk him away to a welcoming forecastle.

In such a port it seemed as though Captain McGee would have no trouble to ship a crew.

The Orion loaded deals for Valparaiso at the Deepwater terminals. When the time came for getting to sea, the skipper applied to his old provider, Music Murphy, of the Rialto. Murphy spoke the good word, and his boarding house runner got busy. Everything was in readiness for the crew to be delivered aboard, when at the last minute Murphy was warned off by Battling Burke, of the Alhambra.

"Don't youse put one single blamed bloke aboard the Orion," was the order which Barney Ugate, Burke's henchman, passed to Murphy, on behalf of his chief.

Battling Burke was something more than the proprietor of the Alhambra; he was top dog of Water Street. His word was law.

Next day Captain McGee came storming into the Rialto, upbraiding Murphy for breach of contract.

"It ain't no good, cappen," whined Murphy. "Me hands is tied. If I buck up ag'in' some one, he'll git me license called at city hall."

"What!" exclaimed the captain with surprise. "I thought you ran this ward, Murphy?"

"I used to once, but that was before we got our present boss."

"And who's your boss here now?"

"Battling Burke. He owns this sailor town, hook, line, and sinker. There ain't a man down here would dare to cross him, and the worse o' it is, cappen, for the sake of some old grudge Battling Burke seems to be laying for ye."

"Battling Burke," McGee repeated the name aloud. "Sounds familiar. Where have I heard that before?"

"Ye ain't bin in this port for years, cappen; I'm blowed if I see how ye knowed him."

"Aye, but I think I do. Is he a big, red headed bruiser, with an ugly scar across his face, as if he'd bin branded with a butcher's cleaver?"

"A gash right across his left cheek from his ear to his dirty mug."

"Yes, that's Burke all right. I remember now. Years ago I had him shipped with me out of the Downs, as second. But I broke him on the voyage and fired him back into the fo'c's'le, because there ain't no room for more'n one master aboard a Bluenose packet. Now I suppose he thinks his turn has come, and he's got me where he wants me, eh?"

"Ye've got it, cappen."

"Well, before he gets through bucking into Tom McGee, mebhe he'll find he's bit off more'n he can chew. But tell me, how did this Burke fellow ever get in here, anyway?"

"Why, he blowed into Halifax a good ten year ago. Swore he was tired o' the sea. He married Madam Terrio, the Tracadie widder, that owned the Alhambra. The widder died soon after, and left Burke the whole works. It ain't no small thing fer a guy to git a joint like the Alhambra, wi' a first class bar, a boarding house, a dance hall, and the two pretty Terrio girls throwed in to boot.

"On top o' this, Burke was a great scrapper, and added a gymnasium onto the Alhambra, had his own training quarters there, and taught boxing on the side. Because o' his fightin', he begun to cut quite a figger wi' the boys along the water front. So he starts, wi' Mulligan and his friends,

gettin' a hold on the politics o' this 'ere section.

"Before I knowed it he was boss, instead o' me, and now there ain't a long-shore ward from Fairview to Greenbank that Battling Burke don't have in his vest pocket. There's only one guy bigger 'n' Burke, and that's Jake Farrell, o' the West End. So you see, cappen, it ain't no good fer ye to try to run ag'in' him; ye might as well cough up his price first as last."

"Not one red cent from me for that scoundrel!" shouted the outraged captain as he went out, roaring about how he'd get his crew, "in spite of all the Burkes this side the throne o' God."

Just to hear Tom McGee make that declaration sounded to Music Murphy like the promise of emancipation. Captain McGee was no lightweight when he started in to move scenery. But this time his driving force was spent in vain. A week later he was as far from getting a crew as ever. At last he pocketed his pride and called on Burke at the Alhambra.

When Captain McGee entered the place and glared about, he was met by a bewitching smile from one of the Terrio girls.

"Papa expected you'd come, and he told me to show you right in."

Behind the front bar was a kind of holy of holies. On entering, McGee beheld a burly, red headed plug-ugly rise up to greet him.

"How do, captin'—how do, sir? It's proud I am to see ye; me auld captin' come to visit me in the Alhambra. Sure now an' that's an honor. Gawd's truth—there ain't no one I sooner clap me eyes on. Anything I can do for ye, captin'? I'm at yer service, sir, fer auld time's sake."

"Never mind your lying Irish blarney. You know darn well what I'm here for."

Burke smiled on. "Aye, aye, sir. I can guess what ye're wanting. A crew, eh? And it's me can fix ye up."

"And I suppose you'll be bleeding me white to pay for your dirty varmint."

"Only the regular rates, captin'—only the regular rates, sir."

McGee could not believe he heard aright. "What did you say?" he inquired with an incredulous tone.

"I said, captin', I'll be happy to deliver to ye a crew at the regular rates, and when d'ye want 'em aboard?"

"Saturday morning, before flood tide."

"Aye, aye, sir. We'll have 'em there all right."

"That ain't good enough for me," expostulated McGee. "I wouldn't trust ye, Burke, the length o' me nose. Talking about old times, I remember too well what a lying scoundrel you were. I've got to see this crew before I sign 'em on."

"Very good, captin'—very good, sir. I'll 'ave 'em mustered at Deepwater on Friday mornin', so's ye can give 'em the once across. Mind, captin', fer auld times' sake, I'm goin' to bring ye a pick crew. None o' yer fresh water johnnies. I'm a goin' to bring ye a gang o' real sailormen what's all bin round the Horn."

## II.

THE crew which Battling Burke held in readiness for the Orion was the strangest assortment ever mustered by any crimp.

As noted by Murphy, Burke owed his rise to his pugilistic ability. Recently in the United Service sporting carnival he had knocked out Bombardier Winn, which gave him a provincial reputation. With this advantage he had no trouble in enrolling fistic aspirants in his gymnasium.

At first his pupils were of the baser sort, but with increasing fame there began to come to him a group of young dandies from the first families.

The invasion of these young bloods was not at all pleasing to the denizens of Water Street. Every time they came into Burke's establishment it was with an air of overlordship, winking at the Terrio girls, flirting across the bar, and whirling them about the dance hall in a most proprietary manner.

"These parlor dudes is too much for me," complained Barney Ugate. "Comin' in and out o' 'ere, treatin' us guys like dirt, actin' like as if they owned the whole blooming works, and them a bunch o' little chicken breasted pimps at that. Dunno what the boss is comin' to, anyway."

The lofty manners of the young bucks



roused resentment in Battling Burke, but the Irishman was blessed with tact. His nearest cronies never guessed that he had anything but lickspittle admiration for what he styled "me grand young gentlemen."

Between times, in the gymnasium, Burke was forever regaling his aristocrats with yarns about the life afloat.

"Aye, it's a trip foreign that ye young gentlemen are needing. No man would stay ashore if he'd ever had one touch of the glorious life at sea. Have any of ye young gentlemen ever been off sailin'?"

"You bet," answered Cecil Catty. "Dicky Dawson and I have been on a yachting cruise, all the way to Chester, aboard the Pinkey. Took the girls along, and we sure did have a happy time."

In season and out of season, with his most plausible brogue, Burke kept harping on the call of the sea.

One fine day, when the whitecaps were dancing down the harbor, he flung up the gymnasium window and looked forth enraptured.

"Aye, me young gentlemen," he said, "ye're fools to be sticking around a stinking, measly little office, pen pushing from morning till night, when ye might be cruisin' over the green seas. Just think o' the time that ye could be havin' sailin' before the winds, visitin' the heathen lands, and kissin' the girls under the palm trees. I wished I was young again like ye. If I was, ye wouldn't see my heels for smoke, I'd be off so fast fer a ship goin' foreign."

With spring fever in the air, to add to the wanderlust, Cecil Catty, employed at the cable office, got heartily sick of being cooped up inside. He communicated his sentiments to his crony, Dicky Dawson, a clerk articed to a legal firm. Dawson expressed himself in full accord. That yachting cruise had foreordained that these twain should be nothing less than master mariners.

"What's a miserable lawyer's office compared to a tall ship?" quoth Dicky Dawson.

Catty and Dawson were Burke's two most ardent disciples. In season and out of season they began to knock the settled life of the landlubber, and to praise the

roving vagabondism of the sea. So, in time, among Burke's gentlemen pupils the interest in boxing gradually waned.

Cecil Catty was the first to suggest a change. "Why not shift over from a course in boxing to a course in seaman-ship?"

Battling Burke would not hear of such a thing. But with the general clamor he was forced, with apparent reluctance, to transform his boxing school into a nautical academy.

"Of course ye know, me young gentlemen, this thing has got to be kept secret. We don't want to 'ave all the riffraff talkin' about what we're doin'."

In the interest of secrecy, the aristocrats' class was shifted from the gymnasium to the back of MacDougall's abandoned distillery, by the esplanade. A model of a full rigged ship, a piece of a main brace, a sailing chart, an old capstan, a wheel, and binnacle, together with a few odds and ends such as rope, blocks and tackle, constituted the furnishings of the old vat room transformed into a nautical laboratory.

On the first day, Burke gave a lesson in steering, in this wise:

"Now, then, me young gentlemen, I'm goin' to learn ye how to steer a ship. There's two sides to a ship—port and starboard. Port is left, starboard is right. That's aisy, ain't it?"

"Nothing easier, skipper."

"Now, then, all there is to steerin' is this. When I sez, port yer 'elm, ye shoves down wid yer left. When I sez, starboard yer 'elm, ye shoves down wid yer right. Could anything be aisier than that?"

"Easy as rolling off a log," chirped Catty.

"Easy as rolling off a log," repeated the instructor. "Now, then, Mr. Catty, will you take the 'elm?"

The cable office clerk stood at the wheel, a-thrill with navigator's pride.

"Starboard yer 'elm!"

Catty shoved down with his right.

"Port yer 'elm."

Catty swung the spokes to his left.

All the others had a go at the steering, while Burke went into rhapsodies over their transcendent skill.

"Why, fer ye young gentlemen what's got the breedin' brains, there's nothin' to it. Why, they'll be makin' captings out o' all yez before ye know it."

Aside, there was an especial commendation for Cecil Catty. "Just between ourselves," whispered Burke, "I am a tellin' ye, Mr. Catty, sir, that captin' ain't good enough fer ye. Gawd's truth, I 'opes to be salutin' ye as Admiral Catty before I'm through."

All of Burke's lessons were not as superficial as the first. He taught his tyros how to swing in on a halyard grind, how to tail out on the end of a mainbrace, how to cast off, and to belay. How to man the capstan, how to tend the anchor cable coming in-board.

Burke had been a great chanteyman, and at their tasks, he taught them the chanteys, the work songs of the sea, expending on this infinite pains. Here the old hypocrite made his one real discovery, for out of all that rabble Dickey Dawson emerged as a chanteyman, heaven born.

Dicky Dawson got the march time windlass ditties, and the rhythmic swing of the halyard grinds, as though they had been blown into his soul with wind and brine.

"I'll bet his father and his father's fathers all was sailors," said Burke to himself as he listened to Dickey Dawson sailing into song:

"Oh, blow, ye winds, I long to hear you,  
Blow, bullies, blow!  
Oh, blow to-day and blow to-morrow,  
Blow, my bully boys, blow!"

"Oh, blow to-day and blow to-morrow,  
Blow, bullies, blow!  
Oh, blow away all care and sorrow,  
Blow, my bully boys, blow!"

No director of opera ever toiled more diligently than did Battling Burke to render his crew faultless in the major tasks performed in getting a ship to sea.

"All hands man the capstan," he would bawl, and in the next moment with the tramp of feet around the windlass, with the heave and pawl, and the voice of the chanteyman, one might well imagine oneself aboard an outward bounder, instead of in the vatroom of MacDougall's distillery.

While teaching this smattering of sailorizing, Burke did not forget the sailorly appearance. He prescribed his young gentlemen to a bronzing course on the roof of his gymnasium, where he exposed them to the burning sun with a saline solution on face, neck, and arms, from which treatment they emerged with tanned and weather-beaten aspect. Arms and chests were plenteously tattooed, until even the critical eye of Mr. Burke was satisfied that here, indeed, to all appearances, was a crew of vigorous young shellbacks.

About the time that Burke had his prize pippins whipped into exhibition style, Captain McGee came to the Alhambra in quest of a crew. Hence, there was a real reason for the gusto with which Burke held forth on the excellence of these sailors of his own creation.

On the Friday morning that he had agreed to take his crew to the Deepwater Terminals for inspection, he had them up bright and early, at the distillery, putting on the finishing touches. Several appearing too spick and span were were ruffled up; Dickey Dawson, the immaculate, was given an extra treatment. Catty, the cable clerk, had a persistent pallor, which Burke now obliterated with a stain of walnut. In his new found swarthy hue, with one of the Terrio girls' silk stockings entwined about his neck, clothed in a red shirt, and dirty dungarees, the cable clerk appeared tough enough for any hell slip.

"Now, then, me young gentlemen," quoth Burke, "ye look to me as though every hair o' yer head was rope yarn, and every drop o' yer blood was Stockholm tar."

As a last ceremony, just before leaving the distillery, Burke placed an old ram's horn in the center of the vat room, and marched his rabble around it in single file, at funeral pace. He went through this strange ceremony with all the dignity of a sacred rite. When this was done he exclaimed with a wink:

"It always pays to be ready for questions. Ye dunno what the skipper 'll ask. If he says where 'ave yez been, what 'll ye answer?"

"We've all been round the horn," they shouted in a chorus.



"Yes, Gawd's truth, ye can spit to win-nard now, ye've all bin round the Horn."

### III.

TOM MCGEE was a wise one. As soon as he clapped his eyes on that prize crew he said to himself: "I'll take em."

A healthy, husky, weather-beaten bunch of sea dogs, young and fresh, here was a gang to make a skipper's mouth water.

"Where did ye get 'em, Burke?"

Burke winked, and shook his head.

"All right, ye needn't tell. I know darn well where you got 'em, though. Ye stole 'em off a training ship, just in from a long voyage, too, I'll wager."

Captain McGee marched up and down, snapping his fingers with satisfaction, and for once his scowling face was tintured with a smile. Twice he walked around the gang, then exclaimed peremptorily:

"All right, bring 'em aboard, and we'll sign 'em on."

On the following morning Battling Burke pulled off his incomparable masquerade. The prize pippins came off in a tender, looking like bully boys all. Interspersed with this flock of sheep in wolves' clothing, were enough real wolves to get the ship to sea, Barney Ugate, Mike Mulligan, Hefty McGuirk, and a few other roustabouts.

The Orion had finished loading, and had been warped out into the stream, where she awaited the arrival of her crew. For fear that any might take cold feet at the last moment, Burke had administered a stiff rum ration, hence they were taken aboard in various degrees of exalted inebriation. Several in a comatose state were hauled over the side in buntlines.

A receipt was given for each man by the mate to the chief boarding house runner.

Finally the mate yelled:

"Crew's all aboard, sir."

"All right, mister, stand by for heaving short."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The captain and Jack Flemming the pilot were in consultation on the quarter deck. It was nearly high water; the tide would soon be running ebb.

The mate took charge on forecastle head.

The second mate took the main deck, to stand by, and look out for the chain as it came in over the windlass.

"All hands man the capstan."

"Heave away there."

Was ever such an eager and resistless crew? Hark to the tramp, tramp, tramp of feet across the forecastle head. Dickey Dawson and Cecil Catty, cheek by jowl with Barney Ugate and Bill McQuirk.

"Now, then," called out the mate, "strike a light on the forrard hatch there, Barbecue; she's dead as a graveyard."

At this, Dickey Dawson took off his boots, jumped onto the capstan, and led off:

"We're outward bound, we're outward bound,  
Heave, bullies, heave and pawl.

Oh, bring that cable up and down,

Hurrah! We're outward bound,

Hurrah! We're outward bound!"

Captain McGee paused in his pacing of the quarter. He had an ear for a chantey-man, and the lusty voice that led off from the capstan sounded sweeter to him than that of any prima donna.

"Listen, will ye?" he exclaimed. "Ye can always tell real sailors by the way they whoop her up. My word, he's got a locker full at that. There's a tune I ain't heard since I left the Tallahassee."

Dickey Dawson had sailed into another chantey:

"Round Cape Horn in the month o' May,  
To me hoodah To me hoodah!

Round Cape Horn in the month o' May,  
To me hoodah, hoodah hay!

So blow, boys, blow,

For Cali-forn-ee-o!

There's plenty o' gold,

So I'm told,

On the banks o' the Sacramento!"

"Anchor's apeak, sir," bellowed the mate.

"Very good, mister; shake out your tops'ls."

"Aloft, there, some o' ye, and loose sails."

"Aye, aye, sir, tops'ls?"

"Yes, tops'ls; leave the stays'ls fast."

"Lay out, some o' ye, and loose the heads'ls."

"Put a hand to the wheel."

"Bos'n, get your watch tackle along to the tops'l sheets."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Soon the topsails, and headsails fluttered in the gear, and the Orion began to feel the breath of life.

"Now, then, my bullies, lead out your tops'l halyards, fore and aft, and masthead her."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Dickey Dawson took the forehand of the foretopsail halyards, and to the air of "Blow, Boys, Blow," paid his compliments to Battling Burke in this wise:

"Oh, Battling Burke, he loves us sailors,  
Blow, boys, blow.

Oh, yes he does like hell and blazes,  
Blow, my bully boys, blow!"

This last improvised touch on the part of the chanteyman rendered him solid with the skipper. Bully McGee paced the quarter, snapping his fingers in joyous anticipation of the way he intended to drive his ship to the south'ard.

"I got a crew at last that's something more than almshouse foundlings. Just wait till I drop ye, Mr. Pilot! Just wait till I drop ye, and then, by the gods, ye'll see this blasted hooker cracking on the dimity."

The canvas was set fore and aft, the inner and outer jibs were run up, the sheets hauled to windward, the main and after yards were braced to the wind, the foretopsail was laid to the mast, and the Orion began to look like some white winged albatross fluttering before her flight.

The anchor was hove up and catted, the vessel paid off and gathered way in the slack water, while Dickey Dawson put the crew on their toes to drive the good ship winging seaward:

"Our bark's a Bluenose clipper,  
An' our skipper's Bluenose, too,  
Our cook's a Bluenose blacky,  
An' we're 'most a Bluenose crew.

"Heave hearty on the chorus, then,  
As lusty as ye can,  
For we're outward bound this morning,  
On a Nova Scotia man."

Jack Flemming had been bringing ships down the harbor for years, but with the

gusto of this melody it seemed as though he heard an echo from the piping days of yore.

"Sounds like real old times," he exclaimed, "to hear 'em whooping her up like that across the bar."

The skipper paused again, and listened to Dickey Dawson in the advanced stages of hilarious intoxication, pouring out his immortal soul in those work songs of the sea.

"Aye, Mr. Pilot, I'm a telling ye one good chanteyman like that is worth four men to a watch. Give me a singing ship, and a singing crew and I'll drive her to the crack o' doom."

The Orion was by the wind, a full nor'-wester two points abaft the beam, and with white caps dancing down the harbor, she went storming seaward.

Beyond the protecting heads, she struck the open roll of the Atlantic, and began to spit forward, lifting a haycock of foam from the indigo blue.

Everything was going merrily when by the Sambro Lightship, the tender drew up for Captain McGee to drop the pilot. While fat, old Jack Flemming was clambering down the ladder, another craft shot up to leeward, and cast a line to an expectant hand. In a thrice Mulligan, McGuirk, and the rest of the boarding house runners were over the side, some one cut the painter and they swung her clear.

The last man to leap was Barney Ugate. Barney had been standing to the wheel, keeping a good full and by in the stiff nor'-wester. As he left the wheel he was relieved by Cecil Catty, steering veteran of the vat room.

For a few moments Catty held the Orion steadily upon her course. Then with an oath from Captain McGee at the escaping shipmates, Catty turned back to see what could have happened. As he did so, in a sudden puff, the wheel was wrenched from his lightly clutching grasp, and in a twinkling the vessel was caught aback, with a thunder of canvas, and a terrifying rending of spars and gear.

The whole thing happened so quickly, so unexpectedly, that Captain McGee was taken completely off his guard. It was as if some giant battle ax had suddenly been



raised and struck down his lofty ship. A moment before she was ramping over the cross seas a regnant queen. Then, in the time it takes to draw a breath, she was smitten through every twanging shroud and stay, her maintopsail yard was gone, her rigging all awry.

While the Orion seemed to pause 'twixt life and death, Captain McGee leaped for the wheel, and swung the spokes with might and main. For one agonizing moment she lay inert, then answering to her skipper's nursing hand, she started to come up again into the wind.

But what a sight was the bedraggled wretch that finally came back into her course. A moment's glance was enough to appraise the skipper of the havoc wrought aloft.

"Caught in her ball dress," yelled the mate. "Caught unawares, and tripped for fair."

Captain McGee was completely baffled by this transformation of a triumphant ship, and triumphant crew, into an impotent and helpless mess. He was still nonplused when an excursion boat with a load of Water Street hoodlums passed close in under his weather poop. Leaning out of the pilot box of the excursion steamer was Battling Burke, holding out a rope and yelling:

"Hi, there! Want a tow, captin?"

Tom McGee's answer was a cursing roar that must have been heard even to the citadel hill.

#### IV.

BARNEY UPGATE and the other boarding house runners were picked up by the excursion steamer, which celebrated their exploit in becoming fashion all the way up the harbor.

Kicking Tom McGee, with his dismantled ship, and his green crew, ceased cursing. After his first paroxysm, Kicking Tom was filled with silent determination as he started arduously to beat his way back to port.

Battling Burke had always been an insufferable blowhard. After this triumph, it seemed as though he could hardly contain himself. "I'm top dog on Water Street, me boys, and don't forget it. Don't do for no blasted skipper to mix it up with me!"

As the picnic steamer came alongside, some one on the wharf sang out:

"Where's the Orion?"

"Down by the Sambro Lightship, comin' home with the Cape Horn beauties. I'll bet Kicking Tom 'll have all them prize pippins slaughtered by the time he works his vessel back to port."

Burke broke forth again into uproarious laughter at the picture of the hated skipper beside himself with rage, struggling with his impotent seamen.

On Burke's return at the bar of the Alhambra there were plenty to partake of his flowing hospitality. Finally the society around his own bar becoming tame, Burke started off down the street to the Rialto as he said:

"Just to rub it in to that there Music Murphy about the Cape Horn beauties."

The Alhambra gang came into the rival establishment, ready to clean up everything in sight, but Murphy, standing behind his own bar, exercised a quieting influence. Murphy, a fallen king, nevertheless remained a monarch. Even Bill McGuirk, the most obstreperous, toned down before that cold gray eye.

Battling Burke tried to assume a magnanimous mood toward his old rival. But Murphy was in no wise receptive. "None of that stuff around here, Burke."

"Why, ain't we friends?"

"No, we never was friends, and what's more, we never will be. I was boss of this here ward when you was working on the Blackball ferry, and I'll be top dog here again when you're back in the blooming scuppers."

Burke would have given the signal to clean up the whole works, but just at the moment Murphy was holding a stone beer bottle, a dangerous weapon of offense. Shrugging his shoulders, he led his satellites into the back room, where they sat down and ordered drinks. The atmosphere had become so tense that Bill McGuirk observed: "You could almost hear the air crack."

Remembering the stone beer bottle, now hidden in Murphy's apron, Burke slid an iron cuspidor into convenient range. At the outside bar, a number of the Rialto

runners were held in leash. For the sake of his glass and his furniture, Murphy restrained them.

But there was a limit even to Murphy's restraint. Going to the bar for another tot of rum, some one slipped, and in a twinkling, a dozen couples were stepping it out in a ding-dong scrap.

With the loosening of the tide of battle, Music Murphy gave up to his desire.

"Just one crack at that red head and I'll die happy!" said the old war horse, flinging away his beer bottle and advancing in the joy of naked fists. Burke, for all his boasting of "real fighting," dreaded bare fists above all else.

As Murphy charged upon him he reached for the iron cuspidor, and with a smashing swing stalled Murphy in his tracks. Then, true to his yellow attributes, Burke started to jump on the man who was down.

The fight was at its height when Kicking Tom McGee blew into the Rialto like a West India hurricane. Kicking Tom did not even pause upon the threshold. As much at home in a barroom mob as in a storm at sea, he started to carve his way toward a commanding central figure.

Battling Burke was too preoccupied jumping on the prostrate Murphy to notice what was coming. The first warning for Burke was a gorilla head placed close

against his own as if for a lover's kiss, but the breath that breathed upon him was not the breath of love.

For an instant Burke felt that panting, burning breath, then like a tiger, McGee left the floor in a flying leap, landing with one of those terrible feet in a "French lash," a finishing touch indigenous to the warfare of the jungle. Burke saw the tiger spring, then memory faded in a flood of shooting stars.

Burke did not come to until the following morning. He struggled up with a heaving lift, exclaiming: "Where 'm I at?"

"Ye're aboard the Orion," came the answer of some one, who forthwith hustled him up onto the quarter deck, where the muster aft was proceeding in the usual manner, the Sambro Lightship blinking just abeam.

"How do, mister," said Captain McGee curtly. "You're back agin wi' me as second, and there's your watch."

Burke looked below at the upturned faces of Cecil Catty, Dickey Dawson, and several other of his prize seamen. His speech came back to him with a burst of rage.

"What, them dudes in me watch!"

"Yes, in your watch; you said they was sailors. Had 'em round the Horn, didn't ye? All right, take 'em round again."



## THERE IS NO OTHER DAY

THERE is no other day but this, my dear;  
     No past, no future sure; only this day  
 Is ours.

There is no memory, dear—unless  
 We beckon old shadows to parade;  
 Bearing—stale tears and faded smiles.

There is no raveled tie, my dear,  
 To loves passed on—unless we weave the skein  
 Whereon they climb.

Only to-day is real, my dear;  
 Only to-day is ours; only to-morrow is pledged  
 To us—if we make to-day—our own.

*Leslie Ramón.*





# Out of the World for a While

By **CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS**

*Author of "Ten Thousand Dollars Reward," etc.*

## CHAPTER VIII—(continued).

### THE BOOMERANG.

**T**HE odor of the poured whisky came to Seagrave's nostrils. He looked at the bottle in repugnance. That odor slightly nauseated him. It made him think of places like Sloan's, where men slept in rows on the floor, the reek of their unclean bodies filling the rooms. It brought back a picture of the sheeted figure in the morgue. And on the other hand it made him think of his wife and child.

His right hand lay on the table. The long fingers had been toying with the cards which he had cast down a moment before. Now the hand was suddenly clenched.

"Thank God, I'm done with that stuff."

His voice was low and tense, and there was the vibrating tone of utter truth in it. The eyes with which he looked at the bottle and at the filled glass in Radcliffe's hand were full of disdain.

Allison coughed on his drink and set his glass down.

"You fellows that reform are damned good—too damned good," he said. "Because some people can't drink like gentlemen they want to take it away from other people that can."

Seagrave turned to him. He had disliked Allison from what he had seen of the man, and now he felt that dislike grow into hate. He knew that the hate had been

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born that night he had seen Allison enter the old home, but it had not grown till now.

"You can drink your head off for all I care, Allison," Seagrave said.

Allison's face purpled. He was about to speak, but he caught Radcliffe's eyes. Radcliffe was looking at him scornfully, as much as to say that Allison was interfering with what they were jointly trying to do.

"Oh, no offense, Seagrave," Allison said with the quick change of front which he was capable of in emergencies. "I meant nothing personal. Let the game go merrily on."

They played for half an hour longer. Then Seagrave began to feel sleepy. He tried to fight off the feeling. He did not want to break up Radcliffe's party. He still thought that Radcliffe had merely intended to be kind to him. But his eyes grew heavier and heavier, and presently he began to nod as Allison dealt.

He shook himself awake and looked at Radcliffe with an apologetic smile.

"I'm sorry, Radcliffe," he said, "but I'm afraid I'll have to run along. I need sleep. I want to work on that thing tomorrow. I'm dead."

He rose, and Allison stopped shuffling the cards.

"It's strange you can stand so little," Allison growled out of an alcoholic discontent with everything. "You're a strong man. You've been up for two days and a night and you hardly show it."

"How do you know I have?" Seagrave asked.

"Radcliffe told me," Allison answered.

Seagrave caught the frowning look of annoyance which Radcliffe tossed at Allison. Suspicion suddenly dawned in Seagrave's mind. He glanced at Miller. Miller was looking at him as if he waited for Seagrave to move. That confirmed Seagrave's suspicion. He sensed that there was something wrong here. Radcliffe's party was apparently not all it had at first seemed to be. He rose.

"I must be going," he said. "There are five of you left. That'll make a game of a sort."

"Of course," Radcliffe said in an at-

tempt at heartiness. "Sorry you are sleepy, Seagrave; but it's no wonder. Get some rest between now and Monday."

"All right," Seagrave said shortly. "Good night."

Except Allison, the men bade him good night. Allison sat glowering in his chair. Radcliffe accompanied Seagrave to the door.

"Don't mind what Allison says," Radcliffe urged. "He's had a few too many."

"So I see," Seagrave said.

He stepped out into the soft night and walked briskly up the street. When he knew his footsteps must have been lost to Radcliffe, who stood in the doorway, he stopped. Glancing back, he saw a man come down the walk from Radcliffe's house. After a tentative look up and down the street, the man came in Seagrave's direction.

Seagrave stepped into the shadows. Miller passed him in a moment, walking rapidly toward the corner. When he reached it, he stopped and looked up and down as if he were puzzled. Then he turned back.

Seagrave left his concealment and met him halfway. Miller started at sight of him.

"You were going home and changed your mind," Seagrave laughed.

"Forgot something at Radcliffe's," Miller mumbled.

"I'm going right up to my hotel—if that interests you," Seagrave said in a sharper tone. "The information may save you trouble."

Miller managed a stare.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"Whatever you make of it," Seagrave said, and went on up the street.

He no longer felt sleepy. The clock above the courthouse marked only nine. He thought he would go to see Holmes.

As he walked along he wondered about Allison and Miller. He saw clearly that the party which Radcliffe had given had not been a step in his social rehabilitation. There was no one at Radcliffe's who could have done him any good socially in Hartwell. Allison didn't amount to anything, and Miller did not. The two other men were nonentities.



Allison came finally to stand out in his thoughts. The fellow was no good. Undoubtedly he was working a skin game. Probably he had been doing that for years. Seagrave decided to try to get a line on him.

Holmes was in his rooms, and he greeted Seagrave cordially.

"I thought you might drop in to-night," he said. "Anything doing?"

"I've been up to Radcliffe's," Seagrave said dryly. "He gave a party for me."

"What was his game?" Holmes asked.

"What makes you think he had a game?"

"Oh, the devil. I know Radcliffe. He's slipping. I heard to-day at lunch that you had gone to work for him and there were some expressions of surprise. Everybody seems to think that Radcliffe has fallen on evil days. They say he has let Allison sew him up more or less, and he's been speculating in some pretty wild stuff."

"Allison was there to-night," Seagrave said. "They had booze."

"Offered you some?"

"Radcliffe said I was welcome, and Allison rather urged me. I didn't touch it, of course. No virtue in that, though. I simply didn't want it."

Holmes leaned to him.

"Arthur," he said, "do you suppose you will again be the clean, white, generous boy you used to be."

"I don't suppose so," Seagrave said wistfully. "I don't suppose time will turn back that far."

"Perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned it," Holmes said. "I don't want you to be discouraged if it doesn't. You can't expect too much. What are you doing for Radcliffe?"

"I'm working on some plans for a new stove," Seagrave answered. "I think I've stumbled on an idea."

"You won't hand it over to Radcliffe, will you?" Holmes asked.

"Oughtn't I to? I'm working for him. I can't be less loyal to him than Olney is to Mrs. Seagrave."

"You ought to quit Radcliffe," Holmes said. "He won't do you any good. He's trying to play you for a sucker in some

way. I recommended you to him merely to give you a start in the only business you know."

"He wanted me to get Olney's plans," Seagrave said.

"Well, I'll bet that's it," said Holmes. "Radcliffe is after those plans and Allison is after Mrs. Seagrave's money. You can't be tied up to a crowd like that."

Seagrave sat plunged in thought. He was more amused than resentful because of Allison's and Radcliffe's effort to tempt him. He had gained enough from it to treat it lightly. He was as sure of himself as if he had never taken a drink in his life.

"I wanted to talk to you about Allison," he said at last. "You know the breed. They've been doing the kind of work Allison is doing now, in one way and another, for a great many years. Allison isn't clever. It's conceivable that Allison has been in trouble with the authorities, isn't it? He must have a record."

"I anticipated you a little in that," Holmes said. "I've been to see the chief of police. He's a friend of mine in a way. I've had him looking Allison up. He'll find anything there is to find."

"You were doing that to protect Ruth?"

"Yes, I was. I'll tell you: Ruth is doing surprisingly well with the business. I'm sort of old-fashioned, and I'm not too keen about women in business. But I'll have to confess that Ruth has shown good judgment. Her taking Radcliffe's sales manager away from him was a first rate piece of work, though I shouldn't, a while ago, have expected Ruth to strain the quality of mercy quite so hard."

"It was good business, and she's a business woman," Seagrave defended her.

"For a fact she is," Holmes conceded, "and that's where her danger lies. It all depends upon how hard she is hit by the money fever. If she gets the sudden-riches bug she'll be liable to fall for Allison's game. Allison's plausible in the way those fellows are. And he has not made the mistake of showing any undue admiration for Ruth as a woman. That has pleased her, and he knew it would. His putting things strictly on a business basis must have made a hit with her."

"You think he's an out-and-out crook, don't you?"

"Oh, sure. No question about it."

Seagrave again meditated for a space.

"I'm through with Radcliffe," he said then, "and that's strictly business, too. What he does personally is none of my funeral, of course. But I don't think he can do me any good."

"What shall you do?" Holmes asked. "Did Radcliffe give you an advance?"

"Yes, but I've got most of it. A week's work will put me square with him. I haven't paid my tailor. I think I'll apply to the Seagrave company for employment."

Holmes favored him with a stare.

"That would create a strange situation, wouldn't it?"

"Why? Mrs. Seagrave is a business woman. The fact that I'm her husband ought not to make any difference. That's the logic of Ruth's attitude."

"I suppose it would be no stranger than a lot of other things that are happening," Holmes agreed.

"Do you know a man named Miller?" Seagrave asked.

"I don't. Why?"

"Oh, nothing," Seagrave said. "He was at Radcliffe's to-night."

He decided swiftly to keep his encounter with Miller to himself. That was a little matter which he would settle with Mr. Miller personally. He wouldn't be at all reluctant to land on Mr. Miller's jaw if Miller persisted in trying to keep tabs on what he was doing.

Before Holmes could speak again, his telephone rang. He rose and answered the call.

"Is that so? Uh-uh. Yes. Rather serious, yes. Miller, eh? Work for Allison. Well, I'll be right down. Have you phoned to Radcliffe? You might. Yes, you can doubtless get bail, but they may hold him a while till he gets straightened out. Not very bad? Well, you'll have to convince the police of that."

He hung up and turned round to Seagrave with a chuckle issuing from his throat.

"What do you think of a thing like that happening in this Great Sahara," he asked.

"What do you think of its happening to a fox like Allison?"

"Well, what?" Seagrave urged, as Holmes choked on his laughter.

"Allison," Holmes gurgled, "has been arrested for speeding while intoxicated."

## CHAPTER IX.

### A LITTLE PAYMENT ON ACCOUNT.

"WELL, I'll be darned," said Seagrave. "The fox has been caught in his own trap. Who phoned you?"

"That precious Miller," Holmes answered. "He said he and Allison were on their way to their hotel from a business meeting, and Allison narrowly missed another car and went into the curb. A handy policeman investigated and ran Allison in."

Seagrave revised his opinion of policemen just there. He saw that his former opinions had been a bit biased. On occasion a policeman could do a lot of good in a sad world.

"Miller wants to retain me as counsel for Allison," Holmes went on. "I told him I'd be right down. I don't want the case, of course, but I'd like to have a talk with Allison just about now."

"Would it be ethical to take me along?" Seagrave asked.

"I guess the ethics of my noble profession won't suffer," Holmes said. "Besides, Allison might be called a pal of yours. You and he had been engaged in a little social diversion when Allison got ready for this plunge."

"That's right," Seagrave laughed. "Well, it's about the most ironical thing that's come my way in a long time."

Holmes telephoned to have his car sent round and he and Seagrave drove to the station. Miller was standing before the wicket window which a police officer was working back of. He hastened up to Holmes with outstretched hand, but when he saw Seagrave he stopped and withdrew the hand.

"Oh, I'm not butting in," Seagrave said. "I was visiting Mr. Holmes and thought I'd run down with him to see what the row



was. I had left Allison just lately, you know."

"For God's sake, you're going to keep your mouth shut about that, aren't you?" Miller asked. "It won't do Allison any particular good to have that come out just now. I said we had been making a business call."

"And you were," Seagrave hinted.

Miller gave him a sharp inquiring look, but Seagrave's face was void of any look of significance.

Miller turned to Holmes.

"These cops are fresh, Mr. Holmes," he said. "They won't let me give bail for Allison."

"Are you in a position to give bail?" Holmes asked.

"I can get it," Miller said, and he flushed.

"I'll speak to the sergeant," Holmes said.

He went up to the wicket.

"How do, Mr. Holmes?" the policeman said. "What can I do for you?"

"Can bail be arranged for Allison?" Holmes asked.

"That bird is kinda wabby on his pins," the officer said. "I don't know as it's going to do any harm to let him stew where he is for a bit. If we let him out now he's liable to run his car over the top of a house. Maloney, who brought him in, said he was trying to loop the loop down on Main Street but couldn't quite make it. You his lawyer, Mr. Holmes?"

"For a minute," Holmes said.

The policeman dropped a heavy eyelid over a bright eye. He lowered his voice so that Seagrave and Miller could not hear him.

"He ain't quite in your line, is he, Mr. Holmes?" he asked. "You better leave him to some of these here shysters. They'd be about his speed. You know we been keepin' our eye on him for some little bit. I understand a request come from the Federal officials to see if he was making a collection of kids' penny banks or anything like that. You get me?"

"Oh," said Holmes, raising his voice, "he's a well-known business man, isn't he? A promoter."

"Sure, he is, and it's a damn shame to have to lock him up like he was one of them old-time common soaks. But the law, it seems, don't discriminate none. Stiff thing, this here law."

"You're not going to accept bail for him?" Holmes asked. "Rather irregular, you know."

"Oh, I got to take bail," the officer said.

"But a bailed man has got to be able to go out of this here snug harbor under his own steam. I don't know as they's anything in the rules that pervides that I shall let him be towed out. You want to see him, Mr. Holmes?"

"I'd like to."

"Awright. C'mon."

He walked along behind the wicket and opened a door and came out into the main room. He opened another door and called to the turnkey.

"Gentleman to see the guest in No. 624," he said. "The one that just registered."

"Any objection to these other two men going in?" Holmes asked.

"Not unless they're des'prit characters," the officer said with the levity and laxity of a small-town policeman. "If you say they're all right, go ahead."

The turnkey led them to a third door, opened it, and ushered them into a corridor. He indicated a cell at the end of the row. Holmes, followed by Miller and Seagrave, went to the cell. Allison looked up from the bunk where he had been sitting with his head in his hands. He got to his feet and came to the bars.

"Ah, Mr. Holmes," he said thickly. "Come to take care of my case, have you? Damned outrage, I call it. Can't a respectable citizen drive home without being picked up by some infernal cop? I was tired out from overwork and must have nodded at the wheel. Nothing more to it than that. Not a thing in the world."

"Are you sober now, Allison?" Holmes asked. "How did you happen to spill over?"

"Why, my dear fellow—"

"Never mind that part of it. Are you sober enough to walk straight?"

"Certainly," Allison said sullenly.

He lifted his head in an effort to prove that he could at least stand erect, and for the first time he saw Seagrave. A look of malevolence came into his bloodshot eyes.

"What in hell are you doing here?" he demanded.

"I came with Mr. Holmes," Seagrave said.

"Came to witness my discomfiture, did you?" Allison asked, and a look of pride came into his eyes at his ability to handle the unwieldy word.

"Oh, no. Thought I might help."

"Well, that's all right," Allison said, and he sagged against the bars as his will to appear sober was overcome by his actual condition. "Now, how about bail, Holmes?" he asked.

"They'll accept bail just as soon as you can walk out of here."

"And that's now," Allison said.

"I guess I can get you out," Holmes said. "Who'll sign your bond?"

"Can't you do it?"

"I could, but I won't," Holmes said coldly. "I came down here to help you as I would have come to help any one in distress. You'll have to get another lawyer after to-night."

Allison's eyes flamed and he turned them on Seagrave.

"You've been talking," he accused. "You've had it in for me right along. Well, Holmes, suppose you call up Mrs. Seagrave and ask her if she will sign—"

Seagrave covered the distance between him and the bars of the cell in one leap.

"You dirty pup, if you mention her name again I'll choke you to death the minute you step out of that cell," Seagrave said in a low voice. "You crook, take back that suggestion or I'll do it."

Allison fell back from the bars in the face of Seagrave's white fury. He had a sudden sober moment in which he realized that Radcliffe had been mistaken in his estimate of Seagrave. Allison knew men in a crude sort of way, and he realized that this man was not the weakling Radcliffe had pictured him as being. This anger was the flaming, white anger of a strong man.

"I was merely making a suggestion to my counsel," he said.

"Take it back," Seagrave grated.

"Oh, I take it back," Allison said. "I was just joking."

"That's worse than if you had been in earnest, if such a thing were possible," Seagrave ground out. "I'll pay you for this, Allison. I'm on your trail and—"

Holmes laid a hand on his arm and drew him back.

"Shall I call Radcliffe?" he asked Allison.

"Yes, and tell him to hustle down here," Allison said.

They went back to the outer room and Holmes got Radcliffe on the telephone.

"Radcliffe is rather annoyed," Holmes said as he left the telephone booth. "If Allison is all the things Radcliffe muttered about him, he's bad."

"I'm going to beat him up the minute he leaves that cell," Seagrave stated.

"And be arrested yourself," Holmes said. "Ruth wouldn't like that."

Seagrave relaxed.

"Oh, all right," he said, "but I'll get that fellow. I'm going right after him."

"I wouldn't announce it if I were you," Holmes said.

Seagrave turned away and walked up and down the room. He did not regret the passion which had flowed through him. He hadn't had an attack like that in a long time. He found it a cleansing thing. It seemed to have burned up through him and to have destroyed something weak in him, the rubbish that had been in his soul from the past. He had a notion that Ruth, in spite of her poise and her self-confidence, needed a man to protect her. There was a good deal of unreality, a good deal of nonsense, in the whole situation as he viewed it. He was promulgating no universal creed. He was merely saying to himself that his wife's place was in the home where she would be safe.

Radcliffe hastened into the station in a few minutes, his face as black as thunder.

"Where's Allison?" he demanded of Holmes.

Holmes turned to the officer.

"Mr. Radcliffe is prepared to sign Mr. Allison's bond," he said. "Will that be satisfactory?"



"I guess so," the officer said, and he went to the door and gave the turnkey a leisurely order to bring Allison in.

Allison was a little uncertain as he came into the room, but the worst of his jag was over. He looked a little frightened as he glanced at Radcliffe.

"This is an outrage, Radcliffe," he said. "I—"

Radcliffe withered him with a look and went up to the wicket.

"Papers ready?" he asked.

The officer looked at Allison.

"Where did you get your booze, mister?" he asked. "Know some place where they sell it?"

"I gave it to him," Radcliffe said. "I got it right out of my cellar. Is that any of your business?"

"Mebbe not this trip," the officer said. "But if I was you, Radcliffe, I wouldn't be turnin' too many drunks out of your house in the night."

"What do you intimate?" Radcliffe asked angrily.

"I don't intimate nothin'. I'm sayin' it as plain as I can. A man can have his private stock, as I understand it, but he don't send drunks out of his house and get away with it for long. You can sign your name right there. I suppose you got property worth more'n a thousand dollars."

Radcliffe said nothing to the jibe. He scrawled his name and turned to Allison.

"Come on," he said.

"You be in court on Monday mornin', fellow," the sergeant called after Allison.

Allison cast a look of hate at him and followed Radcliffe into the street. The three other men came on their heels. Radcliffe threw open the door of his car.

"Where's your car?" he asked Allison.

Allison passed a hand over his forehead. There was a settling down of the fog in his brain.

"Damfino," he said. "Where is it, Miller?"

"I suppose it's up on Main Street where you left it," Miller said. "My God, to think of your pulling this bone at this stage of the game."

"Shut up," Radcliffe ordered. "Get in, Allison."

Seagrave stepped up to them and laid a restraining hand on Allison's arm as the man lifted a foot to step into the car. He let the foot fall and turned about, shaking himself impatiently free.

"I'll have a man-to-man apology from you, Allison," Seagrave said.

"Oh, you shut up."

"Apology for what?" Radcliffe demanded belligerently.

"It's between him and me," Seagrave said. "Don't you interfere."

Again Allison moved as if to enter the car. Seagrave took him by the shoulders and whirled him about.

"Why, you damned gutter snipe," Allison screamed.

He struck out at Seagrave and Seagrave laid his flat hand against his face and pushed him back against the car. Allison fell through the open door and sat there, unwilling or unable to rise.

"What 're you trying to do, Seagrave?" Radcliffe demanded. "Keep your hands off him."

"Off you, too?" Seagrave asked.

Radcliffe was boiling with rage. He had interested himself in Allison's rubber company, and he had hoped, in the uncertain condition in which he found his finances generally, to profit by Allison's final clean-up. He was enraged to think that Allison had brought himself under the eyes of the police at this critical time.

His eyes now swept Seagrave. He had a longing to find relief in violence. It flashed across him that Seagrave could not possibly be in as good physical condition as himself. By all physical laws, Seagrave's health should have been undermined. In their boyhood he had not been Seagrave's physical equal; he ought now to be his superior.

"You forget you're talking to your employer, don't you?" he temporized.

"Employer, hell!" Seagrave ground out.

"You're no employer of mine. I quit you to-night before you came down here."

"That's an excellent return for my kindness," Radcliffe said scornfully.

"Kindness, hell, also!" said Seagrave.

"You don't know what kindness is. You and Allison are a pair to draw to. Allison

is trying to hook suckers, and you're trying to steal Olney's plans. You hired me only because you thought I might be able to go out and get those plans for you."

"You didn't hesitate to take my money," Radcliffe said.

Seagrave drew a pocketbook from an inside pocket. He cast it into Radcliffe's face.

"There's the most of your filthy money!" he shouted. "I'll pay you the rest in the morning."

Radcliffe had fallen back against the blow. His face had turned yellow from the rage of a man whose soul is mean. His hands were clenched at his sides. He only awaited an opening to smash his fist into Seagrave's face.

"You'll pay the rest of it now," he said.

"Righto," said Holmes cheerfully. "No time like the present. How much are you shy, Seagrave?"

"About a hundred and ten dollars," Seagrave said. "But you don't need to make it up, Holmes. I'll get it somehow in the morning."

"It's a privilege and a pleasure," Holmes said. "It's one of these rare privileges that a little man gets."

"What do you mean by that?" Radcliffe asked, seeking to divert Seagrave's attention so that he might get in that blow.

"I mean that if I were set up on my feet comparably to you and Allison, I'd knock both your blocks off," Holmes retorted.

Seagrave turned to him with a smile on his lips. His rage was cooling. He saw that a cool man could get even quite as satisfactorily as one whom anger heated. He wanted to grin at Holmes in appreciation of Holmes's sanity.

Radcliffe thought his moment had come. Seagrave's face was half turned. He flashed his fist in the direction of Seagrave's chin. But Seagrave had been watching him out of the corner of his eye. He ducked the blow, and caught Radcliffe's descending arm and shoved Radcliffe back against the car. Radcliffe caught himself and straightened up quickly. Seagrave's fist caught him on the point of the jaw. He clutched at the curtains, missed them, and fell on the step

and from there to the ground. He rolled off the curb.

"In the gutter," said Holmes sardonically. "Behold the rise of one man and the corresponding fall of another."

Seagrave turned around to Miller.

"You'd better get your friends into the car and drive away," he said.

"And you'd better move as if you had a certain place to go in a limited time," Holmes added. "I see a bright gleam of brass buttons right up there on the stoop of the police station."

Miller cast an apprehensive glance over his shoulder. The policeman was slowly descending the steps. Miller got Allison and Radcliffe into the rear seat of the car as he would have loaded two sacks of grain in. Then he climbed to the front seat, slammed the door, and stepped on the throttle. The car sped away.

Holmes and Seagrave walked over to Holmes's car.

"You might have been pinched, Seagrave," Holmes said, opening the door.

"The punch would have been worth it," Seagrave said.

"I'd take a year myself, if I could turn that trick," Holmes sighed. "By George, I didn't give Radcliffe that hundred and ten, and your pocketbook is lying over there somewhere. We better get it."

They went back to where the pocketbook had fallen to the pavement. Seagrave picked it up. As they returned to Holmes's car the policeman came out on the sidewalk. His hand went to his cap in a dignified salute.

"Fine evening, gentlemen," he said, and passed on.

Seagrave stared after him.

Gentlemen? Well!

## CHAPTER X.

### "A LONG WAY BACK."

THE next evening—Sunday—Seagrave set out from his hotel for a stroll.

At least he had said to himself that he was going for a stroll, but doubtless he knew, subconsciously at any rate, that he was going to see his wife.



It had rained a little during the day, and it was a soft night with stars showing on a velvet background where white clouds were falling back to the western horizon.

Seagrave had a sense of well-being. He seemed to have had a renewal of his youth. Physically he had never felt better. His mental and physical reaction seemed to be complete. There was content in his heart. He felt like a man freed from chains which had bound him for a long time. Even his situation with his wife did not depress him. Without any great stretch of the imagination, he might have pictured himself going to call on her as he had done in his younger days. He was borrowing somehow from the sweet serenity of that old time.

The amusement and the physical satisfaction which he had got out of his encounter with Radcliffe and Allison was still with him. He had chuckled over the grotesque outcome of their attempt to catch him in that trap which had held him for so long. He saw that he had been the child of a kindly fate. The fairies of good will must have laughed, too, at the discomfiture of his blundering enemies.

He had made haste that morning to straighten out his debt to Radcliffe. Holmes had let him have the money to make up the sum he needed and a little more to go on and square himself with his tailor.

He went round one square to lend color to his fiction that he was merely going for a stroll, and that brought him to a corner near the old home. He let the fiction go then, and went up to the house. As he approached the door it was opened and Miller came out. He turned to speak to Ruth, who was standing in the doorway. Then he came down the walk.

Seagrave stopped so that Ruth would have time to close the door before he accosted Miller. Miller peered at him through the gloom without seeming to recognize him at first.

"What 're you doing here?" Seagrave demanded.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" Miller asked. "All dolled up, aren't you? Well, I don't know as it's any of your business what I'm doing here. It's a free country, more or less, and I can still go and come as I like."

Seagrave put a hand on his arm and his fingers bit into Miller's soft flesh.

"You keep away from here from now on," Seagrave ordered. "If you don't—"

A swinging fist was more eloquent than the finishing of the sentence would have been.

Miller jerked himself free.

"You keep your dirty hands off me," he said violently. "You may be able to hang your bluffs on men like Allison and Radcliffe, but it don't go with me."

"I've a notion to slap your face," Seagrave declared. "That 'd be about your speed."

"I wish you would," Miller retorted. "If you did, I'd have you pinched, and you'd know what the inside of a cell was like—not, I guess, that you don't know already. Go on with your slapping. I've got my face right here with me."

Seagrave turned from him and started up the walk.

"You wouldn't fight back," he said. "There isn't a scrap in the whole bunch of you. Get out of here and stay out."

Before he rang the doorbell he looked back. Miller was standing where he had left him, looking after him, and Seagrave could imagine the malevolence in the man's eyes. He could not, however, imagine the venom that was in Miller's heart. Miller was without the slightest conscience. He had not a man's strength, and he had to be wily where another man would have been strong. There was nothing he would not stoop to.

He was still standing there, his lips twisted and his eyes blazing, when Ruth opened the door to admit Seagrave. He departed, muttering vile oaths when Seagrave entered the house and closed the door behind him.

Seagrave, without knowing it, had stepped on a rattlesnake. The snake had not struck—yet.

In the house Seagrave was not thinking of Miller. He saw the quick scrutiny his wife gave him, and he smiled at her.

"What are you thinking?" he challenged her.

She shook her head and led him into the library.

"You wanted to see Grace?" she asked,

"And you," Seagrave said.

"Grace is over at the next door neighbor's," Ruth said. "She'll be back presently."

"Ruth," Seagrave asked, "what was that man Miller doing here just now?"

"He's Allison's representative," Ruth said.

"I know it, and he's just about the kind of representative Allison would have. What did he want?"

"It was only a matter of business," Ruth said. "He merely came to ask if I would see him at the office to-morrow. There were some papers he wanted to have drawn up before he came if I would see him."

"Are you going to buy stock in Allison's company?" Seagrave asked. "Surely not."

"I've been watching Allison's company for some time," Ruth said.

"Do you know that Allison was arrested for driving his car while he was intoxicated?" Seagrave asked.

"I hadn't heard of it," Ruth answered coolly. "It wasn't in the morning paper."

"No; Holmes had kept it out. Holmes owns the paper, you know. Allison came whining to him late last night, and he had the news suppressed."

"Thornton isn't a friend of Allison's, is he?" Ruth asked.

"I should say not. He's going to put Allison in jail before he's through with him. I don't know that I'm at liberty to mention that, but I'm mentioning it to you so that you will be on your guard."

"Well, I'm grateful," Ruth said.

She did not look as if she were grateful. She looked as if she were only amused. Seagrave felt his throat tighten as he saw how kind and sweet she looked with that amusement glimmering in the depths of her handsome eyes. She was more like the Ruth of old. But he caught himself up. He had to wait.

"How did Allison get into that condition?" she asked.

"Radcliffe gave a party for me," Seagrave answered. "Poker party. He had whisky for all of us. Miller and Allison were there and two other men."

"You didn't drink?" she asked in a low voice.

"The party was given in an effort to get me to drink," Seagrave said. "Radcliffe practically asked me to get hold of Olney's plans. Of course, I refused. Allison wants to sell you stock in his company. They had some sort of notion that if I yielded to temptation I would be a handy tool for them. I didn't fall for it, though."

Ruth clasped her hands in her lap and her eyes fell.

"Was it hard to refuse?" she asked. "It was a fine thing to do."

"Well, it wasn't hard, and there was nothing fine about it. I didn't want it. I said, 'Thank God, I'm through with that stuff.'"

He was watching her closely. He hoped for a sudden lift of her eyes with thankfulness in them. A glad cry might even come from her.

But she only nodded her head slowly.

"In time that might make you safe," she said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"I'm safe now," he said.

They were silent for a moment. Ruth did not at once look at him.

"Allison and Radcliffe on the one side, and I on the other, had a little mix-up outside the station after Holmes had Allison released," Seagrave said. "I quit Radcliffe."

"It was the only thing you could do," she said. "What are your plans now?"

"I'm looking for a job," he said. "Is there an opening at the Seagrave foundry?"

She looked up, and he saw a queer look vanish from her eyes. She smiled now with eyes and lips.

"Certainly," she said. "I can use a good man. We shall need salesmen on the road as soon as Olney's new stove is ready."

"I'm not going on the road," he said. "I'm going to stay right here in Hartwell."

"Come to see me in the morning," she said. "I'll find something for you."

She tried to speak calmly, but he detected a little fluttering of her hands.

"Ruth," he said tensely, "isn't this ridiculous? Why we can't we take up where we left off?"



She shook her head.

"Do you remember one night in spring seven years ago, when I came to see you, and you met me at the door?" he asked. "You were always meeting me at the door with that laugh in your eyes. I thought no one was at home, and your landlady came down the stairs unexpectedly while I had my arms about you?"

Ruth got unsteadily to her feet. Her face had gone white. She started for the door. Seagrave sprang up and stepped toward her. Love for her expressed by a great longing was surging through him. It was ineffably sweet and yet there was pain in it.

"Ruth," he said. "Wait! We can't go on like this. Isn't there some chance for me—a fighting chance? That's all I ask. I'll wait till I'm gray if you'll give me just one word; if you'll say that I can hope a little."

She shook her head in a fierce determination, but he saw that her lashes were wet.

"No!" she breathed. "No! Don't touch me. There! Grace is at the door."

There was intense relief in her tone. She dashed the tears out of her eyes and went to the door. The street door was opened and closed, and Grace came up to her mother. She looked at her keenly in a child's wondering way, and then her eyes traveled to Seagrave's face.

"What's the matter?" she asked with a precision beyond her years. "Is mamma crying again? What's she crying for? Why does she cry? It makes me feel bad, too." She caught at her mother's dress and leaned against her.

Ruth dropped an unsteady hand to her hair.

"It's all right now, dear," Ruth said. "Mamma isn't sad."

"Well, come in, then," Grace said. "Don't go to your room and shut the door the way you always do when you want to cry."

She tugged at her mother's dress and drew her into the room. Her mother took her in her lap. Seagrave held out his arms to her.

"Won't you come to me, Grace?" he asked.

"No; I'll stay here this time," Grace

answered. "Why do you go and come the way you do? Mr. Graham, over next door, doesn't go and come like that. He's always at home. He was reading out of a funny book to Lucille and me just before I came home. It was a book all about rabbits. I wish you could stay here and read to me about rabbits. Can't you?"

"I'll send you a rabbit book in the mail to-morrow," Seagrave said.

"And come and read it to-morrow night?" Grace asked.

Seagrave questioned his wife with his eyes, but she would give him no answer to his mute plea. She would not add her word to the child's.

"Yes, I'll come to-morrow night, Grace," Seagrave promised.

Grace slipped down from her mother's lap and climbed up on Seagrave's.

He held her gently, though there was a fierce desire in his heart to strain her to him.

"Tell me a story," she commanded.

For a long time his low voice was the only sound in the room. Ruth sat with downcast eyes as if she dared not look at them. Then the child, with sudden and complete abandon, fell asleep. Seagrave rose and surrendered her to her mother. Ruth's hands passed over his as she took the soft burden. For a space their eyes met. There was dumb misery in both their regards. But Seagrave did not attempt a caress, as he might have done. He saw that he must not take advantage of this woman whom he had made suffer.

"I traveled a long way," he said, "and inevitably it will be a long way back."

He went out into the night, leaving his wife holding their child up against her breast.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### MRS. SEAGRAVE'S DEAL.

HOLMES and Seagrave went down to municipal court Monday morning to see what the judge would have to say to Allison. Allison was already there, showing what pomposity he could while he waited for his case to be called.

Radcliffe was not there. Seagrave had a notion that what the sergeant had said to him about his private stock had got under his skin. When Allison's case was called, Allison looked about the room as if he missed his bondsman.

But Allison seemed to be at home in court—to know just what to do. He stepped briskly before the judge and pleaded guilty. The judge regarded him severely. He wanted to know where Allison had got hold of his intoxicants, a feat which the judge seemed to think highly impossible. Allison wished not to tell, though he knew that the judge already knew. The judge frowned and imposed a fine of fifty dollars and costs and thirty days in the workhouse. Allison blanched at the sentence. The judge, however, in consideration of the fact that it was a first offense, remitted the sentence in consideration of payment of the fine.

Allison paid the fine with great alacrity. Then he sought out Holmes.

"Some of those damned reporters were in there," he said. "Can't you continue to hold this out of the paper?"

"I hate to impose restrictions on a more or less free and untrammelled press," Holmes grinned, "but in this particular case I'll do it."

Allison expressed gratitude, but if he had known the facts he wouldn't have been grateful. Two blasé gentlemen had been spectators at his brief hearing. They hadn't seemed much interested in it, but in reality they missed no word of it. Allison had not noticed them in the court room, but he did notice them when they went to the office of the chief of police. That was a tactical error on their part, for they were Federal operatives who were working to land Allison in the penitentiary on a charge of using the mails to defraud. They had told Holmes it would be a good idea to keep the news of Allison's arrest on the lesser charge out of the newspaper, because they thought that if Allison were given sufficient rope he would hang himself. Publication of his arrest might scare off his prospective victims.

Allison and Miller went out of the station together. Miller came back. Holmes, Seagrave and the two Federal men were in the

office of the chief of police. When they came out Miller was scuttling down the hall in an effort to escape unobserved. Allison had sent him back to discover whether Holmes and Seagrave had followed the Federal operatives into the chief's office. But Miller was on the list of the Federal men, and one of them nodded at a third man who had been idling in the hall. He picked up Miller.

Seagrave and Holmes went up the street together.

"You're going to work for the Seagrave company?" Holmes asked.

"I can get a job there," Seagrave answered, "but I may want a few days to myself. This stove idea of mine is coming faster than I expected. I may work it out on my own. Depends on what develops."

"You think it will be a better thing than Olney's?"

"I don't know what Olney's got," Seagrave said, "but this is good, and I know it."

"Well, you know how these things work out," Holmes said. "You may think you've got the idea right where you want it and it may back into its hole and stay there for a month before you can prod it out. Why don't you let me finance the idea?"

"It might not work out at all," Seagrave said.

"If it did I'd make a stake out of it," Holmes said. "I'll go in for a thousand if you'll let me."

Seagrave considered. A thousand dollars would leave him free to develop the idea by himself. He wouldn't have to go into the Seagrave foundry to get his models made. Whatever his invention amounted to, it would be his alone, except for the interest Holmes would have in it.

"That looks legitimate enough," he said. "But would you make that offer to a stranger?"

"Hardly," Holmes said dryly, "but if you mean to ask whether I am offering to back you because I am your friend, I'll say I'm not. The fact that I'm your friend and that I believe in your ability prompts the offer, but I wouldn't make it for friendship's sake alone. I wouldn't do you that injustice."



"All right," Seagrave said. "I'll take you up. I'll give you my note, but I have nothing to secure it now. I will have in some shape or other after a while, though."

"Oh, never mind your note," Holmes said.

They had come to the block in which Holmes's office was located.

"All right, then," Seagrave said. "There's nothing doing. I'll go into the Seagrave foundry and work out the idea there. If my paper isn't good with you, we can't do business."

"I'll take your note," Holmes said promptly. "I'm continually trying to undermine you through a mistaken spirit of helpfulness. I'll cut that out. Everything will be on a strictly business basis between us from now on."

"That's the way the game is being played," Seagrave said. "Even sex doesn't make any difference. Ruth, except in one direction, is proving herself an excellent business man."

They had come up to Holmes's office now and they went inside. Seagrave drew up and signed a note, payable in ninety days, and gave it to Holmes.

"You think Allison is going to sell Ruth some of his rubber stock?" Holmes asked.

"Miller has an engagement with her this morning," Seagrave said.

"Well, Miller won't get away with it," Holmes said. "We haven't exactly got the goods on Miller yet, but if he sells stock to Ruth I think we will have. Allison had been trying to sell stock to her for a long time. I think he's getting ready to blow. Miller will make representations to Ruth that will give us a chance to detain Allison till we can get him on a charge of using the mails to defraud. All we need just now is something to hold him on."

"If Ruth should pay Miller a good-sized sum of money this morning she wouldn't get it back, would she?" Seagrave asked.

"I don't think Allison has ever let go of a penny that has come his way," Holmes replied. "But I'm not interfering in Ruth's case."

He stopped for a moment, flushing, and drumming on the top of his desk.

"Damn it, Seagrave," he went on. "I wouldn't care if Ruth did lose some money on Allison. I'm just old-fashioned enough to think that she has no business running that foundry. I'll admit she's making a success of it just now. The danger is that she will get too sure of herself. The fact that Allison can hoodwink her shows that she has no place in the business world. If ever there was a raw swindler, it's Allison, but from the very first he has been successful with Ruth. Of course she has been slow, due to a purely feminine caution, but Miller is going to sell her that stock this morning and it isn't worth a cent. However, the transaction will teach her a lesson and it will eliminate one more crook from the business world."

Seagrave took out a cigar and fingered it absently. Then he looked at Holmes.

"And I," he said, "am going down to Ruth's office and kick Miller out of there. I'm not going to let a cheap crook like him hold her up."

Holmes grinned.

"All right," he said. "That's about what I expected."

"Do you mean," Seagrave asked, "that you had to tip me off to this to get action out of me?"

"You didn't seem to be doing anything about it," Holmes apologized.

"Didn't I?" Seagrave asked. "You're off on that, old friend. I have been on the job all along. I met Miller last night and told him where he alighted."

"Well, I turn the case over to you," Holmes said, "and I'm glad to do it. You can steer a straighter course than I could. I'll confess Mrs. Seagrave's business career hasn't made any hit with me. Go to it!"

Seagrave left the office and went down to the foundry. He went into the outer office where the clerks were working. One of them, a middle-aged man whom Seagrave knew, came up to him with a question in his eyes.

"Hello, Blair," Seagrave said. "I'd like to see Mrs. Seagrave if she isn't too busy."

"She said she wouldn't see any one till a man named Miller had come and gone," Blair said. "Maybe she didn't expect you. Shall I ask?"

"If you will," Seagrave said.

Blair disappeared into an office marked "Private." It had been the private office of the elder Seagrave. It was the office in which Seagrave himself should now have been sitting, carrying on the business of the Seagrave company.

Blair came out presently.

"Go right in," he said.

Seagrave advanced into the smaller room. As he did so a stenographer came out. She was a fluffy blonde and she gave Seagrave a stare of wonderment. Seagrave closed the door behind him.

Ruth sat at his father's old battered desk. There was a window at her back and the morning sun touched her hair, burnishing it. She was severely dressed for her business day, but she was none the less lovely for that simplicity. She looked very fresh. The color in the cheek which was turned to Seagrave was as fresh as Seagrave had ever known it to be in the past. She was a delicious combination of girlhood and sedate womanhood.

She had been signing letters which the stenographer had apparently just laid on her desk and she did not look up till she had put pen to the last one. Then she raised her head and gave Seagrave a level glance.

"Good morning," she said.

He had a notion that she was a bit too self-controlled. Doubtless she had prepared herself for this interview. But Seagrave was not nettled by the coolness of her greeting. The pose was not unbecoming. Though she was about to walk into the trap which the wily Allison had set for her, Seagrave had no objection to her assuming that she was as efficient as she looked.

"Good morning," he said, and he kept his own tone cool and even and did not smile, though he could not keep a glimmer of amusement out of his eyes. "Has Miller been here yet?"

"I'm expecting him every moment," Ruth said. "He telephoned a while ago."

Seagrave moved closer to the desk and stood beside it.

"Ruth," he said, "a couple of Federal agents are following Miller. They were in police court this morning when Allison's

case was disposed of. Another will be here this morning after you have concluded your business with Miller. Miller and Allison will be arrested with your transaction with Miller as a basis for a holding charge. You don't want to get mixed up in a case like that, do you?"

Ruth put the signed letters in a basket at her elbow. She looked at him with a whimsical smile touching her lips.

"And you have come to save me from these men who seek to defraud me?" she mocked him.

"That is what I came for," he said soberly. "I ask you not to see Miller. Let me meet him outside and send him on his way. I assure you he won't trouble you again."

"That is kind of you, Arthur," she said quietly, "but I prefer to transact my business in my own way."

"But—"

Seagrave had no time to finish. Blair opened the door and poked in his head.

"Mr. Miller is here," he announced.

"Send him in," said Ruth briskly.

"I'll go?" Seagrave suggested.

"Please," Ruth said.

All right! Good old Holmes had the right dope. Ruth was determined to go it blind. Let her! She would have her lesson and then she might not have so much faith in her business ability.

Seagrave went out as Miller entered. Miller closed the door. Seagrave, his anger rising, in spite of the satisfaction he had pretended to express to himself, went outside. The Federal man who had picked up Miller was there.

"I'm Seagrave," Seagrave said shortly. "I know what you're here for. If there is anything you want to ask me, shoot. I've just been talking to the president of the company."

"Miller talking to her now?" the agent asked.

"Yes."

"She going to buy his stock?"

"I couldn't dissuade her."

The Federal man permitted himself to indulge in a thin smile. He lounged back against the brick wall of the building and smoked a cigarette. What seemed an in-



terminably long time passed, but it was, in fact, only twenty minutes. Miller emerged. He looked at Seagrave and his companion and started up the street.

"Just a minute, Mr. Miller," the Federal operative said softly.

Miller wheeled about. His eyes were hot with anger. His lips worked nervously.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Would you mind holding up the front of this building for a while?" the Federal man asked. "I've been doing it while I waited for you. Suppose you do it while you wait for me?"

"I'm in a hurry," Miller said.

"I know it, but you'll get over it. It'll be a fine thing for you to get used to a lot of leisure."

"Who are you?" Miller demanded.

"You know without asking. All the disguises in the world wouldn't conceal a policeman in any shape or form from you."

The operative suddenly dropped his bantering air and stepped up to Miller. He ran his hand over Miller's pockets.

"What's that for?" Miller cried.

"Thought you might have something on your hip," the operative said. "Or a gun."

"Well, what next?"

"Will you keep him company for a few minutes, Mr. Seagrave?" the operative

asked. "I want to step inside. Mebbe he won't care for your company, but make him like it. I won't be long."

"It'll be a pleasure," Seagrave said.

The operative went inside.

"You've just pulled another bone," Miller observed.

"So?" said Seagrave.

"You don't believe that, do you?"

"If I disbelieved everything you said I'd be playing safe," said Seagrave. "Shut up! I don't like the sound of your voice."

He let his gaze travel down the street as if even looking at Miller were repugnant. Miller, seeing Seagrave's gaze was averted, watched him out of the corner of his eyes. The venomous look which had been in his eyes before was in them again. He looked as if he would murder Seagrave.

"You're the long-lost prodigal, aren't you?" he sneered.

Seagrave remained unmoved.

"But I don't see any fatted calf being killed for you," Miller said.

"I wouldn't enjoy anything more than setting my heel on you," Seagrave said, looking at him.

Miller's jaw tightened. His thin lips went into a straight, hard line.

"You wait," he said to himself. "I'll hand you something for all this."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK



## SLAVES TO THE DEAD

THERE is nothing pitiful about the dead:

In their hard boxes lying stiff and straight,  
And being driven through the street in state—  
There is nothing pitiful about the dead.

No! It is we  
Who are their slaves, who need  
The meed  
Of pity.

Slaves to the dead are you and I  
Slaves are we all, and shall be—till we die.

Mary Carolyn Davies



# Mystery Farm

By EDMUND ELLIOT

**M**R. RICHARD GRAHAM, mining engineer by profession, pushed his heavy motorcycle up the last few yards of the steep rise that had proved too much for an engine already rebellious, and halted with a sigh of relief.

To the left the woods, fresh, vivid, odorous of spring and new life in their early June dress, cut off all view, but to the right the ground fell away in the mighty sweep of the Pemmagawassett Valley to the river sparkling in the early morning sunshine.

Beyond, hills piled on hills, mountains on mountains, as far as the eye could reach. Before him the road, visible for a mile or more, wound downward at—for northern New Hampshire—a quite moderate angle. Graham's eyes, following the road, rested upon a collection of buildings perhaps half a mile distant, and he nodded contentedly

as he drew a letter from his pocket and opened it.

He read:

It's a jolly old joint, known as the Dennet place; but I call it Mystery Farm, for the neighbors seem to think—though they won't say much—that there is something queer about it, and about me for buying it; not haunted exactly, but not just "canny." I should worry. A touch of mystery is the spice of life.

You can't miss it, Dick; when you reach the top of the worst hill of your experience, with a deep valley to the right, and about two-thirds of New Hampshire spread out like an ordinance map before you, you will see half a mile away, Mystery Farm.

The main building is a two-story and attic four-square stone affair, built in 1774, but a number of wings, ells and additions, including a stable connected by a woodshed to the kitchen ell, have been built from time to time since; and I have added a ten-foot front porch, and a small garage.



The barns, *et cetera*, are on the opposite side of the road.

Come a-runnin', Dick! Your new sister-in-law is anxious to greet the one member of the family she has never seen, and so is your benedict brother.

WARREN GRAHAM.

Dick grinned as he returned the letter to his pocket, mounted his wheel and scorning brakes, but with his siren shrieking like a lost soul, coasted down the hill, utterly reckless of life or limb, or the speed laws. He swung in upon the turf before the house and as his siren emitted a final banshee wail sprang off before the front gate.

Rather to his surprise, for he had made noise enough to arouse the township, no one was in evidence.

Was it possible they were not yet up? But that couldn't be, for the bedroom windows were open, the shades raised, and the sheets hanging to air over the backs of chairs.

Also the upper half of the "Dutch" front door was open.

With a loud hail of "Ahoy! the house!" Graham pushed open the gate and strode up the neat slate path of the trim garden, already gay with early, old-fashioned flowers, to the porch.

The latter was partially inclosed with bamboo screens and a hammock and hammock chair swung at either end.

A couple of tables, half a dozen roomy chairs, and a low work-basket, all of wicker, stood about upon grass rugs, while a litter of papers, books and magazines, a cribbage board, a pack of cards, and a set of chess gave it a cozy homy appearance.

Graham lifted the big bronze knocker and sent a thunderous double knock ringing through the house, but it elicited no other response than its own echo.

No one answered. No one appeared.

"What the dickens has become of everybody?" he grumbled, peering into the window of the room to the left of the hall. "I've got the right house certainly. There is Warren's desk, and his bookcases, and the same old rickety chair.

"They can't *all* have gone out. Elinor's kid brother is with them, Warren wrote, and her old nurse is the cook. They must keep at least one man. Guess I'll go in."

The door offered no obstacle, and he was soon in the library. It seemed in much better order than he had ever known his brother's den to be before—the result of Elinor's efforts, doubtless.

The big, battered table desk, though covered with papers, manuscripts, and open reference books, looked almost neat. A half-finished page of manuscript lay on the blotting pad, an old pipe beside it.

On the mantel was his brother's pocket-book, open, and quite plethoric with yellow bills. The same old careless Warren! Dick smiled as he hid the leather case behind a photograph.

The room on the farther side of the hall, evidently the living room, was in perfect order, but most of the furnishings were new to him, and there was an unpleasant, damp chill in the air that puzzled him for a moment.

But after a glance about, he passed into the dining room, and there he stopped in amazement.

The room was untenanted, like the others, but that it had not been so more than a very few moments was apparent. The table was set for three, and a half-finished breakfast was at each place.

The silver coffee percolator still steamed. The coffee in the half empty cups was warm. So were the plates, and even the food upon them.

A boy's cap lay on the floor by a chair where it had been carelessly thrown. A pink sunbonnet hung by its strings on the back of the chair by the coffee urn.

Everything else was in order, except that the position of the three chairs at the table seemed to indicate that their occupants had risen in somewhat greater haste than usual, for they were pushed well back and twisted slightly sidewise.

Frowning perplexedly, Graham passed into the kitchen. Here, too, everything was as it naturally should be. The kettle sang merrily upon the stove, and a huge tawny cat of the "tiger" variety drowsed upon the hearth and eyed him with a reserved but not unfriendly interest. At the deal table one place was set, and, as in the dining room, a half eaten meal, still warm, stood there.

A battered straw hat and a corncob pipe beside it seemed to indicate that the "hired man" also had been suddenly interrupted at his breakfast.

Graham's puzzled frown deepened. There were any number of logical explanations, of course. Some of the stock might have broken loose, the dog might have cornered a woodchuck, or there might have been an accident at one of the neighbors—if there were any.

The nearest house, so far as he had been able to see from the top of the hill, was fully a quarter of a mile beyond.

But if some such simple thing had happened, how was it that they had got out of hearing in the four or five minutes which was apparently all the time that had passed since they left?

He called again, rather impatiently, and discovering a tin horn hanging by the kitchen door—used to summon the man to meals, probably—he blew it strenuously; but there was no reply.

"All right," he growled at last; "starve, my friends, if you want to. I'll make myself at home and be comfortable."

Nevertheless for a few moments he continued his search, discovering the maid's room, woodshed, and stable—where three horses munched hay contentedly—and finally the bedrooms.

One of these he found evidently prepared for himself. His trunk and hand luggage, which he had forwarded by express, were there, and he proceeded to divest himself of his travel-stained, leather motoring togs, and get into a fresh flannel outing suit.

But when a half hour later he returned to the dining room and found the situation unchanged, he began to be vaguely alarmed. The strange, unnatural silence was becoming oppressive, while the subdued animal noises that now and then broke it—the low, peaceful clucking of the fowls, the occasional stamp or whinny of a horse, even the friendly purring of the big cat, seemed only to emphasize the utter absence of all human sound.

Certainly something unusual must have happened; but what? What could happen on a glorious, brilliant June morning, in that beautiful, peaceful country?

Somewhat anxiously he began a more systematic search. The attic, cellars—there were two or three of each—the barn across the road, the garage, even the corncrib, ice house and silo pit.

But he found no one; no trace of any one, nor anything to indicate where or why they had gone; and presently, hoarse from shouting, and with his light suit considerably the worse for dust and cobwebs, he returned to the house.

Something must be done; it was well over an hour since he had dismounted at the gate, but he was loath to give an alarm. Suppose after all the absence of the household had some perfectly natural explanation? Suppose a horse or calf or some one of the animals *had* got loose, and they had all turned out to catch it?

Such an explanation was by no means impossible, though so far as he could discover no live stock was missing.

"I'll give them twenty minutes more," he decided. "That will make two hours I've been here; then I'll tackle that telephone in the hall and call up the neighbors. And in the meantime—"

He ran up to his room, returning shortly with a repeating shotgun and a pocketful of shells, and sitting on the kitchen steps proceeded to fire a dozen shots, in series of threes. This at length brought results.

A few moments after the last report had echoed across the valley a steady rattling sound became audible down the road, and presently a ramshackle buckboard, driven by an elderly gray-bearded farmer, and drawn by an elderly gray mare, appeared, turned leisurely into the yard, and halted before Graham.

Dick rose, leaning on his gun, and the old man, turning sidewise in his seat, crossed one leg over the other and regarded him with keen, mildly curious eyes.

"Good morning," began Graham tentatively.

The old man nodded slightly in answer to the salutation and spat thoughtfully over the wheel.

"That you a shootin'?" he drawled deliberately.

"Yes," replied Dick. "Er—are you a neighbor?"



The farmer jerked his thumb over his shoulder, indicating the direction from which he had come.

"Over yonder," he replied. "I'm Cyrus Bradley. I was just a hitchin' up to go to town, but them shots sounded kinder like a signal, so I sort o' calculated I'd stop over. Anything wrong?"

Dick hesitated. "The shots were a signal," he said slowly, "but—well, to tell the truth, Mr. Bradley, I don't know whether anything is wrong or not. By the way, I am Dick Graham, Warren Graham's brother, you know."

Bradley dropped the lines on the dash, and held out a huge horny hand.

"Glad to know yer," he said, a slight smile lighting his humorous gray eyes. "Mis' Graham told my Ruth they was expectin' of yer. Where's the folks?"

"I'd been hoping they were at your place," replied Dick uneasily. "There is no one here. I've been here nearly two hours and I've searched everywhere."

In a few words he acquainted Bradley with the situation, and as he spoke the humorous gleam left the old man's eyes and he shook his gray head slowly.

"Anything missin'?" he asked.

"Not a thing, so far as I can see, except the folks," returned Dick. "What live stock is there, do you know?"

"Pair o' drivin' horses and th' boy's pony in the stable there. Team o' work horses in the barn, four cows, an' a yoke o' oxen. I guess that's all 'ceptin' chickens and th' pigs. The cattle oughter be in the pasture t'other side o' th' house."

"They are," replied Graham dejectedly. "Was there more than one car?"

"Automobile? No. Just th' one tow-ering car you see there." He nodded toward the open door of the garage, and shook his head gloomily. "All I can say is it's mighty blamed strange, but then, I ain't such a terrible lot surprised neither; and I kin tell yer, young man, there's folks around here that won't be surprised a mite—not a mite."

"What the dickens do you mean by that?" asked Dick sharply. The old farmer's solemn tone startled him, and he remembered suddenly the words of his

brother's letter. "Not haunted exactly, but not just 'canny.'"

Certainly this sudden and utter disappearance of five healthy human beings was decidedly *uncanny*.

Bradley straightened his lank form and gathered up the lines.

"I can't tell yer nothin'," he drawled slowly, "because for a fact I don' know nothin', 'cept that there's been some darn queer things happened here since ol' Jake Dennet died, forty odd years ago. But if I was *you*, Mr. Graham, I'd lock things up here—in case o' tramps; no one from these parts 'd bother the house—and go along over to my place, just a piece down th' road here. My girl Ruth 'll take care o' yer, and welcome. You kin board with us if you've a mind to, 'til your folks turn up—or they don't."

"Thank you," replied Dick absently. He had followed Bradley's words mechanically, but his thoughts had been focused on the problem that confronted him.

"By the way," he added, "how about the—the coachman, or whatever he was. Who was he?"

"You mean th' hired man," returned Bradley. "I don't know. He seemed a decent enough young fellow. Stranger hereabouts. I calculate your brother got him from Boston. None of th' boys around here would live in th' Dennet place—not for thirty dollars a month. You ain't thinkin' *he* had anything to do with it, be yer? Not considerin' th' way th' house is all in order and nothin' missin', and no sign of a fight nor anything? 'Tain't reasonable."

"No, I suppose it's not," admitted Dick; "but what in blazes has become of them?" he added vehemently, his nerves getting a little the best of him for a moment. "And what is all this hocus pocus about the house?"

Bradley only shook his head mysteriously. "I ain't so derved sure it is hocus pocus," he replied phlegmatically. "I'd know one way or t'other; but this ain't the *first* queer thing that's happened at the Dennet place, young man, nor th' first disappearance, if it turns out to be a disappearance. Well, I got to get 'long to town."

he added, tightening the lines; "you'd better listen to my advice and—"

"And not do anything?" cried Dick. "Why, confound it, I've delayed too long already. I'm going in now to call up the sheriff, or whatever it is you have here."

"All right," returned Bradley without enthusiasm. "But I don't calculate it 'll do much good. Now don't get down-hearted about it," he added, with the evidently kindly intention of cheering Dick up. "Maybe they'll turn up all right after all, and I'll stop on my way back. Good-by."

Graham watched the old man drive slowly away, his feelings about equally divided between anger and gratitude, laughter and tears. Then he entered the house.

But in the kitchen he was suddenly arrested by an unexpected sound; from the dining room came the gentle clicking of silver against china, and for a moment he stood quite still, more startled than he would have cared to admit. Then he sprang silently to the door.

But it was only the big yellow cat, frugally engaged in saving the deserted breakfasts from being a total loss. Irritated at his own nervousness, Dick drove her angrily away to the kitchen, where she sat eying him with an expression of mingled reproach and injured dignity. Then he closed the door and hurried to the telephone.

He had been calling "Hello!" and jiggling the hook for five minutes before he discovered that the instrument was of the old type, requiring the ringing of the bell to reach central, and he had just hung up the receiver and had his hand on the bell, when he was again startled, this time by a very human cough.

With an exclamation, he turned quickly. Leaning on the closed lower half of the front door, her black curls framing a clean-cut sun-browned face, on which sympathetic appreciation of the gravity of the situation struggled with amusement at Graham's obvious and audible disgust, was a girl.

## II.

GRAHAM'S first thought was that the lost family had returned, and that this was

Elinor, but at once he remembered that his brother had described his young wife as possessing ash-gold hair and blue eyes.

This girl was decidedly dark, almost Spanish in coloring; a simple blue chambray dress set off her slender, graceful figure to advantage, and an old fashioned sun-bonnet of the same hue hung by its strings around her neck.

Whoever she was she was a decidedly pretty girl, and as she flushed slightly under his steady scrutiny, Dick became suddenly aware that he had been staring almost rudely.

"I beg your pardon," he began, a trifle embarrassed, going toward her slowly, "I thought at first you were Elinor—my sister-in-law, you know."

The girl smiled, disclosing very perfect, very white and even teeth.

"No," she replied in a rich contralto, "I am Ruth—Ruth Bradley; I met father down the road and he told me about—about what has happened. I am afraid he has been alarming you with the foolish gossip about this house."

Dick laughed a trifle shamefacedly; somehow the vivid, very human personality, the glowing health and vitality of the girl, made his indefinite, half-formulated fears seem absurdly childish.

"I wish he *had* told me of the gossip," he replied, opening the door and stepping out on the porch, "I think his dark suggestions and vague hints alarmed me more than would actual facts. Won't you sit down and enlighten me, Miss Bradley."

"There really isn't much to tell," returned the girl, taking the chair he drew forward. "I don't know why every one about here is so silly. They are hard-headed, intelligent, matter-of-fact people enough about most things, but so far as the Dennet place is concerned they are as superstitious as their witch-baiting ancestors of two hundred and fifty years ago—though most of them have the grace to be ashamed of it, and won't admit it openly."

"They must have some foundation for their beliefs, though," suggested Graham tentatively.

"Well, I suppose they have," returned the girl thoughtfully. "Some queer things



have happened. Old Trueworthy Dennet built the house just before the Revolution. He was a master mason by trade, but had turned sea captain, and grown rich, by means not altogether moral, it was hinted. He was a giant of a man, nearly seven feet high, and very violent, and his five sons were like him.

"They built the house themselves, and it is said no one was allowed to touch it or go near it. Then the Revolution came, and before it ended all five of the sons were killed, and when the old man died, the house went to a much younger son, who had been a baby when the house was built.

"He was a little queer, too, and his son Jacob was queerer still. He was very 'near,' as we say about here, a regular miser, in fact, and he had only one son, Ephraim, who was as huge as his great-grandfather, but who was so bullied and cowed by his father, that he was just a sullen beast of burden.

"When the Civil War broke out, Ephraim, who was only seventeen, but well over six feet in height and big in proportion, ran away and enlisted. Old Jacob was furious, and openly disowned and disinherited the boy.

"Well, the war passed, and nothing was heard of Eph, and one morning a few years after—in 1869, I believe—old Jacob was found dead with an awful bruise on his temple and his neck broken, at the foot of the cellar stairs.

"It was supposed, of course, that he had fallen, but two young farmers who were coming home late that night, reported having seen a huge figure, in some kind of a tattered uniform, skulking through the woods near the house, and of course gossip at once asserted that Eph had returned and murdered his father, and they cited as proof the fact that no will could be found, though it was known one had been made.

"But, of course, there was no real evidence. Eph hadn't been heard of for eight years, and wasn't heard of until three months later, when he wrote from New York in answer to an advertisement the lawyer had put in the papers for him, for there being no will, he was heir.

"Well, he came back and settled down

here, and was queerer than any of his ancestors. Really insane, I imagine, and a regular hermit. He wore his old uniform, carried his rifle all the time and would not allow any one near the house. The only person he ever spoke to was father, who worked the farm for him on shares. Eph never did anything in the daytime, but persons passing after dark told of hearing hammering and other queer sounds coming from the house, and seeing lights flitting about at all hours of the night. Naturally the place was given a wide berth.

"This went on for thirteen years—until 1882—then one day—in this very month—June—Ephraim suddenly disappeared."

"He went away again?" asked Dick very much interested.

"Not in the sense you mean," replied the girl; "at least no one believes so. Father saw him one evening sitting on the step—there was no porch then—with his gun on his knees; the next morning when father came over to speak to him about some necessary matter he was gone. He has never been seen or heard of since."

Graham smiled a little ironically.

"Is that all the foundation there is for the great mystery?" he asked. "Why, a man in his mental condition might have done any crazy thing. Gone West, or wandered off and died in the woods or any number of things."

"There is more," returned Ruth quietly. "After it became evident that Ephraim was really gone, and he being the last of the Dennets, a cousin on his mother's side, took charge of the farm, father still working it on shares—but the house was vacant for seven years.

"It was during this time that it got the name of being haunted. At different times different persons claimed to have seen lights moving in the house, and to have heard strange sounds coming from it. One even swore that he had seen Ephraim himself peering from an upper window.

"Father, who had the actual care of the place, Ephraim's cousin living in Boston, set all this down to tramps or imagination, and when the opportunity offered, rented it to a Boston artist for the summer—the summer of 1892.

"This man came up in May; he lived alone, taking most of his meals at our house, and everything went nicely until the 11th of June. On the tenth, he came to supper as usual, and sat on the porch talking to father for an hour or so. Then he said good night and started home. He was never seen again."

Dick whistled, and his face turned grave.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "What on earth happened to *him*? He couldn't have run away, too."

"No," replied the girl. "I don't think so, though it came out afterward that he was in financial trouble in Boston, and had run up a good sized bill at the store in the village."

Graham's face relaxed.

"Oh!" he rejoined with the beginning of a grin. "This disappearance seems not so very mysterious either."

"Well, that is what the authorities thought," assented Miss Bradley doubtfully, "but there were other circumstances. The hat he usually wore was in the hall, and he seemed to have taken nothing with him, not even all his clothes, for some of them, including his shoes, were found by the bed, which had been slept in. It was as if he had been suddenly roused by some noise, and had merely slipped on slippers and some outer clothes before going to investigate. Even his pocketbook was under his pillow with enough money to nearly pay his bill at the store."

"It is strange," conceded Dick. "Unless," he added thoughtfully, "he took advantage of the reputation of the house, and left things that way purposely to make a mystery of his disappearance."

"The authorities took that view, anyway, I guess," answered Ruth. "There was no very serious search for him, at all events. Of course, this all happened before I was born. The next manifestation I remember."

"Your own experience?" asked Dick quickly.

"Oh, no! I mean I knew the people. The house wasn't occupied again for twelve years. I was not quite twelve, when father rented it to a gentleman from Philadelphia and his invalid wife. In fact, they were

both more or less invalids. They came up the first of June, I remember, with two elderly maids and an old coachman, and it was just ten days later when early in the morning—it was just daylight—we were aroused by shrieks and the blowing of the dinner horn.

"When father and I got here, the whole family, servants and all, were out in the road, the women in hysterics and the men looking a little foolish.

"It appears they had all been awakened a few minutes before by a most curious noise. It came suddenly, at first muffled, but growing almost instantaneously to a deep, sustained roar; it was like nothing so much as the sound of water rushing over stones; in fact, it was exactly like the roar of the rapids below Niagara, and it seemed to come from beneath the house.

"Further, when they all rushed downstairs, they found the house, though it was a very warm night, filled with damp, heavy, very cold air, like, as one of them expressed it, the air of an ice house. I felt it myself when father and I entered the place. The noise had ceased, but the air of the house was like that of a cold cellar, and there was the same earthy smell. That is all, Mr. Graham. The house has not been occupied since, until your brother bought it."

Graham arose and began pacing the porch, his head bowed in thought.

"Miss Bradley," he said at last, pausing before her, "I don't mind admitting to you that I am worried; I am distinctly and emphatically scared. Each of the incidents you have told me, taken by itself, can be explained readily enough. Ephraim Den-net was more or less crazy, undoubtedly; the authorities' view of the Boston artist's case is very plausible; the Philadelphia people were both invalids, and doubtless imaginative and somewhat hysterical; as to the sights and sounds reported by late returning farmers, as your father suggested, tramps or imagination—assisted, perhaps, by an overdose of hard cider—would account fairly convincingly for them.

"But taken collectively, and in conjunction with this last disappearance of an entire family, all healthy, intelligent, normal



people, there is something distinctly, startlingly sinister about them. Besides, you say you noticed the earthy, cold cellar air. So did I when I first arrived. I am afraid there is something very radically wrong."

"So am I," replied Ruth gravely. "But—but what are we to do?"

Dick picked up the shotgun and quietly filled the magazine. "I'm going to search the house again, thoroughly," he said grimly, "and if I don't find them before tomorrow I'll have the house pulled down and the foundations torn out. Will you wait for me here?"

"I'll go with you," replied Ruth, with so much decision in her tone that Dick refrained from offering any objection. Indeed, though he would not confess it, he was very glad of human companionship. "I feel responsible," she continued self-reproachfully as she followed him into the library. "I feel guilty. It was my fault that your brother took this house. It was through me that Elinor heard of it. We were classmates—chums—at Holyoke," she added, answering Graham's glance of surprise. "She had visited me before she was married. But I should not have allowed her to take this place."

"If I know my brother, you couldn't have kept it away from him—once he'd heard of it," returned Dick absently, as he walked to the fireplace, took down a heavy service revolver that hung in its holster over the mantel, and began buckling the belt around his waist. "He is keen for— Good Lord, what's that?"

A weird, mournful howl, coming seemingly from nowhere in particular, yet filling the house with uncanny sound, rose and swelled louder and louder, until, having reached the highest pitch the human ear can stand, it died away slowly, like the dying wail of a lost soul.

For a moment Graham and Ruth stood staring at each other, wide-eyed and pale of cheek.

"What—what was it?" gasped the girl in a hoarse whisper. "Oh, there it is again! It sounds like—"

Again the awful wail echoed through the house, and Dick's pale face suddenly flushed with annoyance.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed with a shamefaced laugh. "It's the cat. I shut her in the kitchen."

But the girl did not laugh nor seem particularly reassured.

"A cat doesn't howl like that for nothing," she replied, "and that sound is not from the kitchen—it's—it's from beneath our feet—from the cellar, I think. Wait—I'll get lanterns."

She hurried away, and Dick, pausing only to pick up his shotgun, followed her to the kitchen.

"It is the cat," he insisted, while Ruth was lighting the lanterns. "She isn't here, you see, and the cellar door is open."

Ruth handed him one of the lanterns without answering, and together they descended the stairs. The cellar under the kitchen ell was lighted by two slits of windows in the foundation, and connected with the cellar of the main house only by a narrow arched opening in the thick wall. There were no windows in the main cellar. It was merely a huge black cavern, with a dirt floor and ordinary masonry walls on three sides, but on the fourth side was a long slope of solid granite. Evidently the Dennet house was literally founded upon a rock.

No attempt had been made to blast out or square this natural wall; it ran apparently in its natural, irregular form, from the end of the heavy hand-hewn beams supporting the floors above, at an incline of about forty-five degrees, to almost the middle of the dirt floor of the cellar.

Graham raised his lantern and peered searchingly about. "Nothing here," he began. "Absolutely empty. I guess—"

"Look!" interrupted Ruth sharply; and following the direction of her pointed finger, he saw at the top of the incline of rock, close against the beams, two greenish points of light that burned with a steady sinister glow.

Dick laughed a little nervously. "It is the cat," he said, "but what the dickens is she doing up there? Here, kittie, kittie, kittie!" he added coaxingly.

A low purring answered him, but the animal did not move.

"I'm going up." Graham handed Ruth

his gun. "I believe she's found something." With his lantern over his left arm, he scrambled up the steep rock on hands and knees. The cat rose as he approached, purring louder than ever, and rubbed against his shoulder.

"Nothing here that I can see," he called back. "Solid rock. Why—what the devil!"

"What is it?" asked Ruth, startled by the excitement and amazement in his tone.

"I don't know," he replied, his face close to the stone. "It's a miracle, I guess, an anachronism. A piece of cloth—linen—growing out of the solid rock. Can you get up here, Miss Bradley? Leave the gun on the ground."

In a moment she was beside him, bending over the strange thing—a three-cornered bit of linen, protruding apparently from the solid granite.

"Why, why!" she cried excitedly. "It's a handkerchief! Look at the hemstitching, and look close, isn't that a crack it's caught in—that fine line?"

Graham did not answer; his face almost touching the rock, he was following the scarcely visible crack with his fingers. For four feet, to the right of the piece of linen, it ran horizontally, then turned downward at right angles; three feet down it turned to the left, running for four feet, and again upward until it joined the first line, just beside the linen—forming a perfect parallelogram approximately four feet by three.

With a deep breath of astonishment, Graham rose to his knees; then he drew the heavy revolver, and with the butt, struck the rock three hard blows; they all fell with dull, dead thuds. Several times he repeated the blows in different places, with the same result, and at last silently assisted Miss Bradley to the ground.

### III.

FOR a moment they stood in the black cavernlike cellar, staring into each other's eyes. The lanterns, which only served to emphasize the thick darkness, sent fantastic shadows flickering among the dust and cobwebs, of a hundred years, and in the deathlike silence, the purring of the big tawny

cat, sounded like the roar of an approaching train.

"What is it?" asked Ruth at last tensely.

"I am not sure," replied Dick, anxiety in his tone, "but one thing is certain—those cracks are the work of human hands and skilled hands at that. Old Trueworthy Dennet was a master mason, you tell me. I believe it's a trap door. I believe there is a secret chamber—a treasure vault perhaps—the other side of that rock."

"And—and you think—they—are in there?" asked the girl in a stifled voice.

"Good Heavens, I don't know what to think!" cried Graham, anxiety and bewilderment robbing him of his usual poise. "Why should they be? Why in the name of common sense should a whole household, jump up, in the middle of breakfast, and rush into a secret cellar—that so far as we know they didn't realize existed—and shut themselves in? And yet," he added thoughtfully, "there is the handkerchief, and the cat, and if it comes to that, where else can they be?"

He straightened up and turned to Ruth, with sudden determination.

"Do you know where I can get any blasting powder?" he asked.

Ruth's eyes opened. "Father has some dynamite—for blasting stumps, but—what are you going to do, Mr. Graham?"

"Do! I am going to blow out that trap first of all. I'm going to see what's back of that rock!" returned Dick. "Will you go for the dynamite. I've got to have drills and a sledge, too."

"But—suppose they are there," protested Ruth. "Won't they be hurt?"

"We must take the chance," he answered gravely. "If they were there and conscious—even if the rock is several feet thick, they would have heard the blows I struck and answered. Anyway, we must find out. Let us go."

"But if it is a door," persisted the girl, "there must be some way of opening it from this side."

"Doubtless," returned Dick, as he led the way upstairs, "but it would probably take us ten years to discover it, if we ever—"

A shout from the front of the house in-



interrupted them, and hurrying out they found old Mr. Bradley peering anxiously in at the front door.

"Land," he exclaimed, a look of relief spreading over his rugged face. "I thought you'd gone an' disappeared, too. Any news?"

Graham told him of his discovery and conjectures.

"It might be so," Bradley admitted doubtfully. "I guess the best thing would be to telephone to Cal Gilson's granite quarry for two or three of his hard rock men. They've got drills and everything and could be here in half an hour. But how about the house? Won't that blow up, too?"

"Hang the house!" replied Dick. "Besides, I'm enough of an engineer, I reckon, to blow out that rock without much damage. You telephone, Mr. Bradley."

Three hours later a group of half a dozen men and one woman stood outside the garden gate of the old Dennet house, anxiety and suspense depicted upon at least three of their faces.

Ruth, the yellow cat in her arms, clung to her father; Dick, a small box, from which wires led into the house—at his feet, looked questioningly about.

"All ready?" he asked sharply.

"Fire away," answered the foreman of the quarry gang.

Graham bent over the box. The others held their breath.

For a fraction of a second nothing happened; then came a dull, sullen detonation; the ground trembled beneath their feet; the windows of the house rattled, and from the kitchen came a single sharp crash as some insecure piece of crockery fell to the floor—then—the little group looked at each other with faces of blank amazement, for in place of the silence that should have followed, a low, muffled, but steady roar, came to their ears.

Except for its unexpectedness there was nothing terrifying in the sound. Its origin could not be mistaken. It was the roar of a distant waterfall.

Led by Dick, regardless of his own previous warning to wait until the gases of the explosive had dissipated, the entire party crowded into the house; but there another

surprise greeted them, for the air was cold, damp, dead, and a heavy earthy smell pervaded everything. It was the atmosphere of a long closed cellar intensified.

Without a word Dick led the way below, the muffled roar of the distant falls growing plainer as they descended, and there he paused, the others crowding around him, staring at the third surprise that awaited them.

Dick had placed his charges skillfully; he had hoped to so split and shatter the stone trapdoor—if it was a trap—that the pieces would drop down inside, but here, fully a third of the shelving stone had disappeared.

Before them was a great black hole, ten or twelve feet in diameter, leading downward at a steep but not impossible angle. How far it went they could not see, for their lanterns illumined it for but a few feet.

"Come on!" cried Dick, eagerly springing forward. "Leave a lantern here to guide us. We can't stop now."

For the first few yards the débris of the fallen wall impeded them, but after that the path led smoothly downward, between walls of rough granite. Evidently it was a natural fissure, caused ages ago by some wondrous prehistoric upheaval, and as they walked the roar of the water grew in volume.

For a quarter of a mile the tunnel continued almost straight, and ever downward, until they were fully a thousand feet beneath the surface; in some places the path was so narrow that two could not walk abreast, in others ten yards across, until at last from the narrowest spot they had yet come to, they emerged suddenly into the most wondrous subterranean cavity they had ever seen.

They stood upon a broad ledge in a vast cavern, so vast that the lights of their lanterns did not penetrate to roof or sides, and fifty feet below them flowed a broad river; swiftly the black water ran, to where, a few hundred feet away, it broke into white foam, and plunged with a mighty roar into some deep crevasse.

But Dick did not pause; taking a lantern from one of the men, he set it by the opening into the tunnel, and beckoning the

others to follow, continued along the ledge above the river.

Just beyond the falls the ledge turned slightly to the left, and Dick rounded the corner confidently, but the next second he stopped short, with a shout of alarmed surprise, that rose even above the roar of the falls.

Before him, standing grimly in the center of the path, a long, old-fashioned rifle on his arm, was a man. Fully six feet six, despite his stooped shoulders, gaunt, and with eyes glaring with hate and animal rage he stood, like a spirit of evil, regarding Graham with a fixed, angry stare.

White hair fell to his shoulders, and a great beard almost concealed his emaciated face.

Bradley, who had been close behind, grasped Graham's arm, and almost shook him in his amazement. "Eph Dennet!" he yelled. "My God, it's Eph Dennet!"

With a snarl of rage, Dennet suddenly raised his rifle, but before he could pull the trigger, Dick snatched out his revolver, fired, and the rifle clattered to the ground, while the old man clapped his hand to his arm.

Then a change came over him; the rage died out of his eyes, and a queer, uncertain look took its place. He began to mutter to himself, and for the first time seemed to notice the little knot of men behind Dick and Bradley. "Not alive!" he shouted shrilly. "Not alive! Eph Dennet won't hang." Then, with a sharp cry of despair he turned, and striding to the edge of the ledge, stepped deliberately off.

For a moment, stunned by the sudden tragedy, no one moved, then Dick and Bradley hurried to the edge and looked over, but nothing could be seen; from far below the sullen roar of the water upon the rocks echoed up from the black void, but that was all.

Dick turned away with a sigh, and a fearful sinking of his heart. If Warren and the rest had come here, what had that madman done with them? They must have been in his power for hours.

"We must go on," he said, putting his mouth close to Bradley's ear. "If they are still alive—"

He broke off, staring along the ledge, then with a yell of relief he dashed forward.

"Warren!" he shouted thankfully. "Here's Warren, and Elinor and all of them!"

#### IV.

"It's simply enough explained," said Warren Graham, when two hours later, somewhat recovered from the effects of their adventure, rescued and rescuers gathered in the library.

"When this morning the sudden roar of those falls, and the draft of cold air interrupted our breakfast, I made a dive for the cellar, calling Mike—the man—to follow.

"Of course the rest of the family all followed, too, and that's where the old man got us. Held us up with his gun and marched us down to the cavern, and on to a little cave off the ledge, just beyond where you found us.

"I don't know what he intended to do with us; the women rather made him hesitate, I think. He'd have dropped Mike and me over the ledge without much compunction if we had been alone, I imagine, as he did the Boston artist—"

"So that's what happened to him," interrupted Bradley; "did Ephraim tell you?"

"Oh, yes, he talked quite freely—too freely to be quite comfortable under the circumstances. It was evident he did not expect us ever to be in a position to repeat what he told us. He was crazy, of course, but not an idiot by a long shot, and he seemed to enjoy talking to a human being, poor devil. It seems he *did* murder his father, though he called it an accident. The old man tried to throw him out when Ephraim turned up one night, and he knocked his father downstairs. Then Ephraim came home for good, because he was starving, and couldn't or wouldn't work, but he lived in terror of his crime being found out, and seems to have regarded every one as a spy, seeking to give him up to the gallows.

"But he remained on, for he knew his father had money hoarded up somewhere,



and one night in his searching he stumbled on a paper that gave him not only the secret of the treasure—there is still five or six thousand dollars in gold coin in the little cave where he had us corraled, by the way—but of the underground river as well, and told how to reach another opening in the great chain of subterranean caverns, nearly thirty miles south of here.

"This, of course, gave him a chance to disappear. He simply went down through the caves to the other opening, built a shack and set up as a hermit. No one thereabouts knew him, and as his hut was in an inaccessible ravine in the woods, seven or eight miles from the nearest house, no one bothered him much; but he used to come back to visit the old place once in a while, and that's what caused trouble, on

the rare occasions when the house was occupied. I guess that's all, Dicky."

"Except one thing," replied Dick with a grin. "You'll have to find a new name for the place. It is no longer a Mystery Farm."

"Well, I'll leave that to you and Ruth," retorted Warren. "You two solved the mystery."

"Don't forget the cat," returned Dick. "If she hadn't found Elinor's handkerchief and yowled about it, we'd have been guessing yet. Let's call the place after her—if she has a name—what are you all laughing at anyway?"

"It's fate, Dick," answered Elinor. "The cat's name happens to be Mystery, too. So this must be 'Mystery Farm' to the end."



## IN TURKESTAN

IN Turkestan, in Turkestan  
Beside a cassia tree there stood  
A maiden with a jasper fan  
Who blew a flute of sandalwood.

And she was like a dim cocoon  
All wound in mazing gossamer,  
Like ivory toys in ivory shoon  
Were the little feet of her.

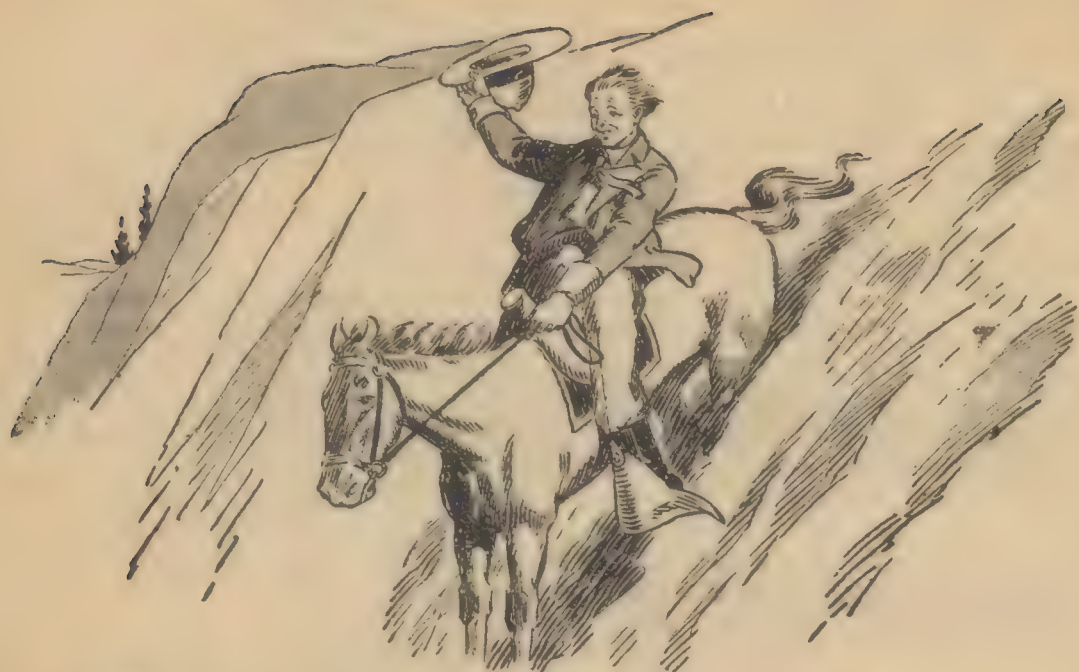
And she was sweet of jessamine  
And smooth as honey garnered from  
A morning full of purple sheen  
In swinging buds of saccharum.

And I would have her for my own  
To love beyond a fabled sea,  
A golden slave beneath my throne  
To shine through veils of lazuli,

To make upon a flute a song  
Lighter than a feather's fall,  
And like a sun-bird sing among  
The sun-birds on the palace wall.

In Turkestan, in Turkestan  
There vanished in a limpid gleam  
Ivory shoon and jasper fan,  
Like the dreaming of a dream.

*Martha Ostenso.*



# The Laughing Rider

By LAURIE YORK ERSKINE

Author of "The River Trail," "Renfrew of the Royal Mounted," etc.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### SERGEANT'S MESS.

BILLY returned to the house in the river bottom very carefully indeed. He left his herd in a gully some half a mile away, and approached with Concho for a reconnaissance. He dismounted well behind the edge of the cut bank, and thanked the mists that heralded the dawn for the veil they offered him below.

Having used that veil, however, he found it had been quite unnecessary, for the sergeant was no longer there. That, argued Billy, was good, but not too good, for it left him no indication of how much time he had. So he hurried matters forward, and by dint of deftly handling a difficult situation managed to bring his business to a satisfactory

conclusion and take his departure before MacQuillan reappeared.

As a matter of fact, he had a good deal more time than he imagined. The sergeant had walked long circles about the place after Billy got away with his horse, grimly determined to find the trail of the absconder. He had failed in this and, moreover, had known himself to be helpless afoot.

But he knew better than Billy had known where a fresh horse was to be commandeered, and had doggedly set out to walk twelve miles for it at about the same time as Billy overtook the Menzies outfit. So it was hours after Billy had cantered away from that night's business, and in the gray of early morning, that Staff Sergeant MacQuillan galloped back hell-for-leather on a borrowed mount.

*This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for October 20.*



He pulled up the brute in a cloud of dust and dismounted with unwonted haste, to hunt once more for the trail of the thief. And, as he rounded the house, the lowing of cattle broke upon his ears and his own horse whinnied at the sound of his master's voice, for MacQuillan had spoken sharply.

Whipping out his revolver, the sergeant dashed into the house. There was no one there. Striding to the barnyards, then, in grim mystification, the sergeant beheld his own mount hitched to the rail of the flimsy corral, and two others stood beside it. Within the bars was a bunch of some twenty cattle.

The sergeant ran to his horse, and found a scrap of greasy brown paper tied to the saddlehorn with a cord on which hung two large revolvers, army pattern. The sergeant tore the paper off, and in the dim light strove to read what had been scrawled upon it with a heavy pencil. It was difficult, but he did it. The missive said:

Tombstone Brand Baked Beans, selected and prepared by gloved workers—Dear Sarge: I return your horse with thanks. It's too heavy and pulls on the lines. Train it bridle wise. Also, I am returning herewith your guns. Each bean is individually delicious. They were useful in the absence of better; but to-night I got better. Thanks for the loan of same. These cattle and three ponies I took off a sport named Menzies, who is a lover of animals, and packs a running iron. Reckon they don't belong to him, so leave them with you. You'll find him and two more rustlers walking. Tomatoes are the health food of healthy people, and I took a liking to the best one of the three ponies—they quench the thirst, and am taking it along. Don't forget to train your animal bridle wise. This milk has been used with best results as infant food and mixed with A lot of thanks, sergeant, and don't take cold—Signed, William O'Brien Argent—Corned Beef Flavor.

Billy had used the same wrapping paper for his note to the sergeant as he had used to record the can readings of the night before. And as MacQuillan read it he stiffened with rage, glared upon the document through a mist of red, felt his mind giving way, and reached for his hip pocket. He drew therefrom his package of fine cut tobacco and quelled the leashed turbulence

of his spirit with a generous mouthful. Then, sanity restored, he faced life once more, a cold and resolute officer of the law.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### WILLIS ON THE TRAIL.

BILLY rode directly from the house in the river bed to the home of the widow MacKreagh. He wanted to present her with the pony which he had taken in lieu of the cattle Menzies owed him. He felt that he might safely indulge in this pleasantry, because, he argued, that with the sergeant delayed in the bottom lands, the promised hunt for his own person could hardly go forward for another twelve hours.

In this he was mistaken, for the sergeant, having made the arrangements for the drive, was powerless to stop it. At the first peep of dawn Craddock had ridden forth from Redstone, Mason and Clancarty from Wild Horse; Willis had taken the trail from Garton, and LeBreux from Dalmailing. Redfayne was abroad from Cleanbrook, and three were pressing in from Macleod. Also, Supernumerary Constable Flynn, dazed at the absence of his superior, had ridden to join Craddock at Redstone two hours after that constable had left.

When Billy arrived at the MacKreagh ranch that morning the hunt was already on, and he discovered his mistake when he strode into the house, whirled the youthful Smedley into the air by way of greeting, and found himself face to face with Constable Willis in full panoply.

Mrs. MacKreagh pierced Billy with a glance from over the redcoat's shoulder. Billy dropped the boy. The redcoat smiled.

"Hello, Duncan dear!" exclaimed Mrs. MacKreagh. "We've been waiting for you." Her voice was the voice of a genial housewife; her eyes were frantic signals. With fine intelligence Constable Willis summed up the situation.

"Mr. MacKreagh, I presume?" said the officer.

"Yore powers of deduction are marvelous," said Billy.

"I asked the constable to have breakfast," warned Mrs. MacKreagh.

"Which was the right play, my love," said Billy.

"Won't you want to look over the stock first?" she suggested.

But Billy was not going to lose this delectable opportunity.

"I just looked it over," he said. "And I gave it its breakfast."

She frowned and scurried about her cooking. They sat at the table.

"I got a new pony for you, young un," said Billy. "Sergeant MacQuillan wanted I should bring it home."

"You have seen the sergeant?" asked Willis. He was very polite.

"Last night," said Billy. He caught the angry eye of Mrs. MacKreagh. "The sergeant sent his love, my dear," he informed her.

"I'm looking for a man," said Willis. He, too, caught the eye of Mrs. MacKreagh, and dropped his porridge spoon.

"Under the table, maybe?" asked Billy solicitously.

"He's about here somewhere," said the redcoat, coming up with the spoon regained.

"That Sergeant MacQuillan," said Billy, "is a real nice feller."

"Yes. This man is an outlaw named Argent—Billy Argent."

"A good policeman, too. Ace high, I reckon."

"Yes. Except for that Menzies fellow, he generally gets his man."

"Menzies?"

"A cattle thief. You must have heard of him. He's broken the heart of every officer that ever had the sergeant's post."

"Slippery, huh?"

"Rather!"

Billy stared in unaffected surprise.

"Rarthe-e-r," he echoed, trying to see how it sounded.

"Beg pardon?"

"Don't. Can't MacQuillan get this Menzies?"

"He hasn't yet. Looks as though he's met his match."

"Menzies?"

"The sergeant."

"Will it hurt him?"

"It may lead to his being transferred."

Billy continued to eat in silence. Willis consumed oatmeal.

"Lose his job?" suddenly asked Billy.

Willis choked.

"You eat too fast," said Billy.

"I'm in a hurry. What did you say about jobs?"

"I asked, would the sergeant lose his job?"

"That's practically what a transfer would amount to."

Willis finished the oatmeal and at once started upon bread and bacon.

"You redcoats are shore efficient," remarked Billy.

"Yes," mumbled Willis. "Then there's this Argent. The sergeant has called on the whole district to round him up. That's a sure sign of weakness. The men are riding in from every post in the district, combing the country for him."

"Shucks. Is this Argent sport so hard to catch?"

"I rather imagine so. It seems as though the sergeant will chew up all the fine cut tobacco in Alberta before we get him."

"How d'you mean?"

"It's a weakness of the sergeant's. When he's excited he must have his chew of Brexton's fine cut, or go mad. They say that Tazewell's store carries a special supply for him. No one else in the country has it."

"Well, well." Billy munched in silence.

"This Argent must be a bad one," he said finally. "Too many of such like around these days. Saw a loafer myself this morning, sort of slinking along in the cañon trails."

Willis pricked up his ears.

"What did he look like?" he asked.

"A long feller about my build with corduroy clothes on like mine. He rode a pony with a tasseled bridle like they use down in Texas."

Willis rose abruptly, his chair falling over backward.

"That's he!" he cried.

"Him, you mean," cried Billy, rising too. Mrs. MacKreagh entered the room in agitation and misapprehension. Billy, she thought, was discovered.



"No!" she cried. "It isn't your man, constable! He isn't!"

"Shore he is, my love!" yelled Billy in high glee. "I saw him go up the Bitter Grass Coulee toward the Redstone trail."

She reproved him with a look.

"Show me where it is?" cried Willis.

"Come on!"

The two men raced for their horses, and in a trice Billy was holding a prancing Concho in, while Willis galloped through the barnyard gate.

"Back for dinner, ma!" yelled Billy.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### HARE AND HOUND.

THEY rode together as far as the first trail, which Billy conceived would lead the redcoat farthest from anywhere in particular, and then parted.

"About three hours ago," explained Billy, pointing out the tenuous and obscure pathway, "I saw this hombre sort of slinking up thataway. If you go on, you'll find that trail leads to Redstone."

Willis thanked him and galloped off.

"Don't thank me!" yelled Billy after him. "It hurts!"

Then he turned Concho back to the ranch again. The widow scolded him severely and with great good humor for his foolhardy impersonation, and Billy heaped coals of fire upon her in the form of the pony he had captured in the night.

"Now Smed can ride them horses to delivery," he explained.

It further developed that Smed could also have brought back some needed supplies for the ranch, only that there was nothing to purchase them with. Billy thereupon overcame the scruples of the independent and high spirited little woman by placing the roll of bills, which he had won at the can reading contest, under the saddle of the captured pony.

"If you should accidental like take orf that there saddle when you get to the store, young feller," he confided to Smedley, "you might get rich. An' if you do get rich, just bring back whatever grub or fix-in's yore ma's in need of."

"I don't know what you mean," said the practical youth.

"Well, don't brag about it. Just be sure an' take orf that saddle when you get to the store."

Billy gave the boy further advice as to the management of horses, saw him on his way, and then sat on the kitchen porch with legs adangle, to consider his own immediate future.

He was now penniless. Also it would be well for him to become scarce and inconspicuous. Regarding the first problem, he bethought himself of Mr. Nicholas Tazewell's I. O. U. He had it in his vest pocket, and it entitled him to collect from that gentleman the sum of one hundred and twenty-seven dollars and fifteen cents. He then dwelt upon that proposition in its relation to the second, and the words of Constable Willis recurred to him: "*The men are riding in from every post in the district, combing the country for him.*"

That meant that every post in the district would that day be without a mounted policeman. Also it meant to Billy that the particular avenue which led to Sleepy River would be clear of any other rider than Supernumerary Constable Flynn, for it was not probable that MacQuillan would return to Sleepy River before joining the hunt.

Therefore, the trail to Sleepy River was not merely the way to that one hundred and twenty-seven dollars and fifteen cents, but it was, moreover, the safest avenue of escape through the encircling hunt. He mounted once more.

"Ma," said Billy, "I'm taking a little ride."

Dreading the return of Willis, she had hoped he would do so earlier.

"Take these," she said, and handed a package of provender up to him. "Don't get wet, or be reckless. And remember to come home when you can."

"I'll remember," he said.

As he started for the gate his agile mind leaped suddenly upon a highly important matter, and he stopped to take it up with Mrs. MacKreagh.

"Smed could be whitewashing the bars of that corral, while I'm gone," he said.

"Why on earth?"

"Then, again," pointed out Billy, "why not on earth?"

"Talk sense."

"Well, if he should start whitewashin' them bars, he'd probably finish just one section an' leave orf. Then if you should have any more of them redcoats come sparkin' you, you could send him out to whitewash another section. I can see that corral from the top of the cañon. If two sections are white I'll know enough to stay away. If three are white I'll know yore visitor has come and gone again. And so on. Reckon I'll sashay down the line."

"You're a bright young man," she said.

The ride to Sleepy River was somewhat elaborated for Billy that afternoon by virtue of the circumstance that some time before he left the MacKreagh homestead Constable Willis, ten miles away, had met an Austrian rancher. He had asked that Austrian rancher whether he had seen the quarry pass his way, and the Austrian had answered that nothing living had come within his vision for three days, not even his own cattle.

"Mr. MacKreagh told me he had seen Argent riding in this direction."

"You mean *Mrs.* MacKreagh."

"No, *Mr.* MacKreagh."

"He's dead. She's a widow this three months."

And Willis, remembering the appearance of the fictitious Mr. MacKreagh, saw his mistake.

"This is very irritating," he said, and rode back at a furious gallop.

He lost the trail going back, but did not abate his speed, and finally debouched from broken hill country upon the open prairie to see Billy in the far distance, single footing on his way to Sleepy River. But Billy saw him first.

Concho raised up her heels and flew, but the police horse had been riding since dawn, and Concho had been riding all night. Billy early saw that Concho would have little chance of losing the fresher horse on the beaten trail, but knew that her lighter weight would tell upon open ground.

So he turned from the trail, and the police charger was soon wallowing in thick grasses, soft earth and sagebrush. But Wil-

lis was irritated, and he stuck. Half a mile, a mile, a mile and a half, they thundered over the prairie.

Concho gained a fair lead as Billy skillfully guided her through ways he knew would worry the pursuer, but the tenacity of Willis began to tell upon the little animal's wind. The constable's fresher mount persistently plugged behind. The lead was gradually diminished.

Billy, his eyes to the front and every muscle helping Concho in her gallant effort, seldom looked back, but he wanted to know if there was to be any firing, and his occasional glances showed the policeman rapidly drawing into easy range.

"Ride, Concho, like you was chased by something." And Concho rode.

Billy noticed that Willis had missed one of his turns—Billy was riding a wide circle—and had ridden well past the kink that Billy had made in his trail. This gave Billy a chance to cut back, but he did it with misgiving.

"He's herding me round," he muttered. But he gained a little, and was glad, for he didn't want to exchange fire with this youngster. He gazed backward at the scarlet figure, and he saw Willis smile.

"If I kill him, he'll tell on me," he informed Concho. And Concho reared, almost throwing her master off.

"Canned catfish!" swore Billy, reining in. For at Concho's hoofs lay the edge of a cut bank which fell away fifty feet to swift moving yellow water. Then Billy understood Willis's smile.

"Corraled!" he remarked, and freed his gun.

Constable Willis charged down. Billy noticed that the redcoat had made no move to draw, and suddenly remembered that that sportsmanlike rule of the force.

"All right, sport!" he yelled. "I'm playin' the game."

He put up his gun, whirled Concho in her length, set her at the cut bank, and rode her down. She did it in three jumps and a slide, and splashed into the river. Willis sat on the top of the bank, appalled; but Concho came to the surface and struggled with her rider through the current to the opposite shore.



"Good-by!" yelled Billy from the opposite bank. "Don't tell her I got wet!" And Willis, riding a spent horse along the edge of the cut bank, saw his quarry disappear.

All of which explains why Billy did not get to Sleepy River until the chill evening had arrived and the lights were alight in the main street.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### FURTHER COLLECTIONS.

**B**ILLY'S first consideration upon riding into Sleepy River was Concho. He had rested and refreshed her after her gruelling ride, and now sought a place off the beaten way where he might leave her surrounded by such dried and yellow grasses as appeal to vegetarian appetites.

He then strolled over to Mr. Tazewell's store. Tacked to the wall under the porch, and faintly discernible in the dim light from the store window, he noticed two handbills; and they interested him deeply. For his own name bore a conspicuous place in one, and the other was dedicated to a minute description of Samuel Menzies.

They both confirmed Billy's knowledge of the fact that he and Menzies were ardently wanted by the police. He tore down his own advertisement and thrust it in his pocket.

Entering the store, he found it thronged with Wednesday evening shoppers. Mr. Tazewell's store was not cramped for room, and yet it seemed that this evening there was little space not occupied. Women and children did their business among the counters, and conversed in little groups where they were most in the way. At the rear a very hot base burner stove deceived a group of men about town with the illusion that they were wholesomely comfortable because they were overheated.

Billy did not intrude obstreperously into this male gathering. He merely lounged up to the first space along the counter which presented itself. This was not far from the door, and Tazewell's antediluvian and one-legged assistant stood near a breach in the counter, gossiping.

"How much Brexton's fine cut you got?" asked Billy.

"Huh?"

"Pay 'tention, grandpa; I want all the Brexton's fine cut tobacco you got."

Billy scrutinized the tobacco stock behind the counter.

"But we just keep it for Sergeant MacQuillan," protested the ancient.

"You don't understand," said Billy. "I want it."

To the horror of the venerable clerk, he strode through the breach in the counter and seized the four last cartons of Brexton's fine cut that Sleepy River possessed.

"You can't have that!" cried the ancient.

"I got it," pointed out Billy. "How much?"

"You'll have to see Mr. Tazewell."

"I will."

The aged man stumped to the rear, where Mr. Nicholas Tazewell kept his glass eye on vacancy and his good one on the cash register; and Billy strode to the rear as well. But he did not immediately approach Mr. Tazewell.

He first pushed his way to the stove, opened the iron door, and deposited the four cartons of tobacco upon the blazing coals. He clanged the door shut just as Mr. Tazewell lumbered wrathfully forward at the call of his henchman.

"Young man—" Mr. Tazewell started to bluster; but stopped short as he recognized his customer. Seven other gentlemen, recognizing Billy at the same time, sent their chairs back with a clatter.

So Billy, his back to the stove, had a talk with them. While he talked he stood with his coat flap thrown backward, his thumbs in his belt, and the butt of his revolver painfully conspicuous.

"That's me!" he answered. "Twenty-nine next birthday."

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Tazewell.

"You fellers pull that every deal," said Billy, and his voice tinkled ominously.

"MacQuillan's gunning for you," quoth another. "Better light out."

"I did," said Billy. "This is where I lit."

"What do you want here?" demanded Tazewell.

"How much is that there tobacco? Four packages I took."

"You can't have it."

"How much?" Billy still smiled, but he spoke with a certain impatience.

"I can't let you have it. You'll have to give it back."

"Sift it out of the ashes."

Tazewell's full face fell.

"You burnt it?"

"I put it in the stove."

"That 'll cost you seven dollars."

"You might o' said so sooner," grumbled Billy, but still he smiled.

He took from his pocket the I. O. U. and showed it to Mr. Tazewell.

"Take it out of that," he requested.

Mr. Tazewell blushed.

"What do you mean?" he blustered.

"There you go again," sighed Billy. "I mean, pay up."

Mr. Tazewell cast a terrible look about the ample audience.

"It's a holdup!" he gasped.

"It's a showdown," said Billy. "One hundred and twenty-seven dollars and fifteen cents."

"I won't pay it."

Billy turned a pensive eye upon the crowd which huddled about him.

"You folks better get out of range," he said. "This glass eyed sport looks like a bad shot."

A flutter of panic ensued, but curiosity defeated fear. Only a few were strong-minded enough to leave.

"You mean you'll threaten me?"

"I mean if you don't pay up right quick," said Billy, "I'll call the police."

Some one laughed. Billy turned to him in mild reproof, and the laughter ceased. Mr. Tazewell emitted sounds suggestive of ironic mirth.

"The police?" he rattled. "That's good. That's a good one."

"Yo're right. They are sort of useless; but I'm betting they can handle you."

"You want the police, mister? Here they are!" cried a voice from the rear, and the crowd moved to let Supernumerary Constable Flynn pass through. Tired of

riding alone to no place in particular, Flynn had returned home.

Billy smiled broadly, resting a hand on his pistol butt, to indicate his good feeling.

"Sonny," he cried, "yo're prompt!"

The minion of the law recognized his man.

"What does this mean?" faltered he.

"Shucks!" said Billy. "Yo're a disappointment."

"You're under arrest," continued Flynn weakly. "Drop that gun!"

"Not right now," said Billy.

"You're under arrest!"

"Shore," assented the criminal. "But first orf I want you to fix up this." He produced the I. O. U.

"It's a legal obligation," he protested, "and old glass eye here won't pay up." He turned a reproving gaze upon Tazewell. "For shame!" he said.

Tazewell blustered; the best thing he did besides short weighting his customers.

"Arrest that man, constable!" he spluttered. "He's a fugitist from justice!"

Flynn wanted to cry. Billy caught his arm in a strong grip.

"You represent the law, young feller," he boomed incisively. "He says arrest me. All right. Grab my arm."

Flynn grasped Billy's arm.

"See? I'm arrested," said Billy. "Now, then, constable, make this glass eyed son of a locoed muleteer pay up his honest debts."

The crowd cheered. They had known Tazewell long, and not infrequently to their grief. Flynn turned to the storekeeper; large encouragement came to him from the crowd.

"The prisoner," said Flynn sternly, glad of Billy's backing—"the prisoner is within his rights. You must pay up that obligation."

"It's an outrage!" blustered Tazewell.

"One hundred and twenty dollars and fifteen cents," said Billy.

"Pay up, Tazewell!" "Pay up, Nick!" came from the crowd.

Tazewell glared frightfully with his glass eye and blinked with his good one.

"Pay up," said Supernumerary Constable Flynn relentlessly.



'And Mr. Nicholas Tazewell paid up.

Supernumerary Constable Flynn watched the transfer of money from Mr. Tazewell's cash register to Billy's ample pockets with an uneasy regard for the future. He was conscious that his prisoner still possessed his gun. Billy pocketed the roll.

"Now come along," urged Flynn.

But Billy drew shyly back.

"Just a minute," he said. "Got to burn this up."

He turned from Flynn, opened the door of the stove, and bent forward with the I. O. U. in his hand. As he bent over, Supernumerary Constable Flynn essayed at once to whisk Billy's gun from its holster and draw his own weapon.

But Billy, bending to the fire, threw the paper into the flames without interrupting a skillfully executed swooping movement which swung him completely about and brought him up with Supernumerary Constable Flynn over his shoulder. Boy scouts call it the fireman's carry, but that wholesome enthusiasm which boys are wont to put into their exercises was lacking on the part of Supernumerary Constable Flynn.

Billy's spirit, however, did not lag. Using soap boxes as steps, he sprang with his burden to the counter and, leaping the breach, ran along the counter to the store window. He held Flynn's body equally across his chest and back, and at least two men in the crowd who had drawn revolvers were thereby prevented from using them.

As Billy ran the length of the counter the crowd moved for the door, but Billy ignored the door. Reaching the store window, which was piled high with a display of merchandise, Billy stood Supernumerary Constable Flynn on his head in a potato barrel, tumbled the piled cans and boxes with a crash to the floor in front of the surging crowd, shattered the window with a barrel of apples, and plunged after it to freedom.

He stopped only long enough to overturn a heavy barrel across the doorway, and then sprinted for Concho, whose knowledge of his coming was overtaken by the feel of her master in the saddle.

Pursuit was further delayed by the fact

that the barrel which Billy had overturned was a barrel of molasses with the bung out, and they who first forced the door found themselves wading in the sticky sirup.

When they had dusted off Constable Flynn and restored him to coherent thought Billy was not in Sleepy River.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### TRAPPED.

WE have seen Annette Savardé romantic; we have seen her baited by Staff Sergeant MacQuillan of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, and pursued by an incensed cow; we have seen her enraged, and we have seen her as gentle before the fact of Billy's admiration as any cooing dove.

But we have not yet seen Annette in the true and tranquil light of her daily occupation. Therefore, to look upon her in the kitchen of her father's homestead that Wednesday evening, deftly preparing the provender for another day on the heels of the dinner that was gone, is to look upon the heroine of vivid drama transformed into as efficient a housewife as the range had ever known.

What quality of housewife she was, indeed, is to be proven by the fact that while she worked beside her mother, she added to a fleeting regret upon the dinner that was gone a hope that it would not be forgotten. When a woman's interest in the affairs of her table takes that subtle touch she is more to be valued than fine gold, because fine gold is no cure for indigestion.

And yet this particular evening was not one which showed the girl in a wholly normal light, for, since the night of her party, Annette had gone about her household affairs with something more than the vigorous interest which pervades the work of the true craftsman. There had been a pensive light in her eyes, which would have suggested to the close observer that her mind was upon still other things. This peculiarity of Annette's eyes was perhaps best manifested when, on this very evening, she heard Billy's voice in the next room.

She stood with the flour sifter poised in her hand, and listened intently. Her father, it seemed, had spoken first, and she had heard Billy's voice raised cheerfully in its reply.

"You don't understand, Aymeel," she heard him cry. "I came to see Annette."

"And I say that you cannot do that," scolded her father. "I will have no criminal in my house."

"You will not," assented Billy. "Where is she?"

"Go!" roared the parent.

"Yes, but where? You didn't say where she was."

"I say get out! Leave you this place! This house!"

"Leave?" said Billy. "I've only just come."

"Billee! I am here!"

The artful girl had stopped only long enough to look at her hair.

"Annie!" said Bill. He caught her father's eye. "Good evenin', ma'am," said he.

"Well you go!" demanded the stern parent.

"But he has come to see me!" protested his daughter.

Her father fixed her with the countenance of Jove enraged.

"Annette, you cannot have friends with this man. He is an outlaw. He must leave my house!"

Billy smiled back at him.

"Not now," he said. "We're talkin'. Come back and put me out later."

"Annette!" Emile decided upon the parental attitude. "Send thees man away!"

"Do you not hear heem, papa?" she cried. "He weel not go. He has something to say to me. Then he weel go." She beamed assurance.

Emile turned darkly away from them.

"Let him not be here when I return," he warned, and left the room. Inasmuch as it was the living room and he departed through the front door, he also left the house.

"Shucks!" said Billy regretfully. "Yore dad's all excited."

But she was thinking of his welfare.

"Why did you come here?" she asked.

"I was ridin' by, and it was cold."

"But they are hunting for you."

"Yes, and when people go hunting they leave home. The safest place in the world to be is right close to where they left from."

She was standing before the sofa near the fireplace, he in the center of the room. He walked over to her.

"Besides, I wanted to see you," he said candidly.

She smiled her appreciation. But her expansive romanticism was founded upon a really practical nature.

"That is nice," she said, "but if they should catch you it would not be so nice. My friend, the thing that makes me like to see you near me makes me want you never to come where I am."

Billy, about to speak, stopped to consider this.

"You mean yo're worried?"

"But of course! I would not have them catch you. Do you know why they want you?"

"It don't signify. They got to get me first."

"They want you for the crime of murder."

"Likewise they want the weather to stay warm. It don't signify."

"But for murder they hang you!"

Billy hadn't given it much thought.

"But they won't get me," he pointed out.

Annette sat upon the ugly sofa and gazed up at him with clear eyed common sense.

"Billee," she said, "I want you to do for me one thing."

"Anything," smiled Billy. "When you look at me like that you remind me of Concho. You and Concho are women to know."

But Annette was not receptive.

"I want you to ride over the border," she said.

"Where?"

"Over the border. I want you to get away out of Canada. Quick! Oh, Billee, you must go! I cannot let them catch you!"



"Catchin' hasn't got anything to do with it, Annie. I ain't leavin' Canada right now for two reasons. The sergeant, I've promised him to ride herd for a while—he's one; and you're the other. When I leave Canada, Annette, I go out, like I came, a free man. And Concho goes with me. And you go with Concho!"

A wholly adorable frown gathered upon Annette's brow.

"You like this Concho ver' much?" she remarked, and pursed her lips.

"Shore. Concho is good."

"You think I am almost as good as this Concho—this horse?"

Billy failed to see the dangerous ground and walked, heavy footed, right into it.

"I think that Concho and you stack way high up," he said.

"Oh!" she cried. "That is the second time! A horse! A horse! You say that I am like a horse!" She arose to give her words the better effect. Billy reviewed his remarks, frankly not believing her.

"I said Concho was good," he asseverated solemnly. "And I said that you are good. I never said you looked like a hawse."

"You love that Concho, that horse, better than you do me!"

"Annie, I love you more than any other female in the whole grass country of North or South America!" He stopped short, amazed that he had spoken the words which for long he had stored in his mind as unspeakable. "Gosh!" he added, and it occurred to him that again Concho had helped him out of a difficulty. "That Concho hawse beats creation."

Annette, who had tottered upon the golden brink of utter felicity, drew back.

"What do you say?" she cried.

"I said I love you."

"But the horse?"

"I don't remember any hawse."

"Oh! You are playing with me! You are making fun!" She strode for the door, pouting.

He caught her by the arm and dragged her back.

"I am making you Mrs. William O'Brien Argent," he said.

With a strong hand, which she felt no

inclination to resist, he held her closely before him.

"You said you want me to go back to the States, Annette. We are going. I'm goin' to take you where there ain't no Eskimose worth ropin', and where the fall evenin's don't remind you of midnight in a cold storage plant. There are flowers in Texas, now, Annette, and the birds are singing in the chaparral with no fear of blizzards or cold weather.

"We'll live amongst acacias when up here they're cutting milk with an ax, and we'll ride together in the January evenings just for the sake of the breeze. In June you will tend to the roses, and there's flower beds that want you, Annie, just as bad as me!"

"Oh, Billee! To-night! We well go to-night!"

Billy smiled and gazed straight into her eyes.

"When the sergeant tells me 'Go,' we will ride into God's country together."

"No! No! He cannot hold you. Eet ees a mistak'."

"That's what I'm waitin' for the sergeant to say."

"But it is dangerous, Billee! You play so much with guns!"

"Not with these pore innocents. I'm waiting for them to draw first after this."

"Oh, let us go now, to your Texas. Your golden land."

Still holding her arm, he drew her to him and looked closely into her eyes.

"When I'm a free man," he said, "we will go."

And very kindly, very gently, he kissed her.

"Throw up your hands!" snapped a voice from the window.

Billy reached.

"For God's sake, don't move! The girl!" rang a voice from another window.

Billy stuck up his hands, and looked about him. From each window gazed the sinister muzzle of a gun; behind each gun was a tensely determined man in scarlet. The door opened and Staff Sergeant MacQuillan entered, revolver in hand.

"I think we've got you this time, Argent," he said, smiling grimly.

With his hands aloft, Billy beamed upon him.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### SOFT ANSWERS.

"IT means that we've got our man, Agent."

The sergeant took Billy's gun, and his face shone cold with triumph. As he spoke Constable Willis entered through one window, and Constable Craddock through the other. They strode forward, keeping their captive covered, and Annette felt an inward shudder as she looked upon the cruel metal of the ugly weapons. Despite their gay uniforms, it seemed to her that these trained hunters of the Mounted possessed something of the same cold menace as their weapons did.

When she looked upon the sergeant's face she shivered. It was graven with implacable resolution. The dread knowledge came to her then that her gallant Billee was firmly trapped. There was no escape for him now.

If Billy was conscious of this, however, he gave no sign of it. He ignored the deadly menace of the guns, and looked upon his captors with positive exuberance.

"It's like a picture book," he said heartily. "Dressed up all red and cheerful. Where's Willy-boy?"

A glint of grim humor crept into the sergeant's eye.

"We thought best to leave Flynn behind," he said.

"That's right," assented Billy. "He might have thrown a gun with a lady present or made some such unmanly break."

MacQuillan froze.

"Put manacles on the prisoner," he said.

Billy's quick eye flickered upon Willis as Willis lowered his gun.

"Keep up yer hands!" rapped the sergeant.

"Ah!" gasped the girl as the guns of MacQuillan and Craddock came forward.

Billy's smile did not waver, but at the sound of the girl's quick catch of her breath his eyes perceptibly hardened.

"That's the play, admiral. Show her you're big and strong," he murmured softly, but the sergeant was deaf to his scoffing.

Willis drew forth his manacles, and reached upward from behind for Billy's hands, but Annette leaped between.

"No!" she cried. "You weel not do that!"

Now Sergeant MacQuillan had ridden all afternoon with the memory of Billy's careless jesting in his mind, and without a scrap of fine cut tobacco to console him. He had met Willis, dejected, some miles from the field of Billy's last escape, and on the verge of fury had hurried with Willis back to Sleepy River.

Here he had made direct for Tazewell's store, found it as if recently invaded by stampeding cattle, heard Flynn's report of Billy's visit, discovered that the entire stock of Brexton's fine cut was consumed by flame, felt himself on the point of weeping, and had placed the unfortunate Flynn under arrest. He had then gone mad, and with a madman's cunning had followed Billy to the home of Annette. If Billy was not actually at the Savardé place, reasoned MacQuillan, that girl would know where he was.

Grimly, spitefully, he had planned what he would say to that girl. And now that he was about to shackle his prisoner she cried out "You will not!" To him who remembered that tobacco! Burned! As if it had been so much common provender!

"Take that girl away!" he roared.

"Easy!" warned Billy.

"Keep up your hands!" mellowed the sergeant.

The door opened, and Emile Savardé entered. He slunk guiltily into the room. Annette was facing him.

"You!" cried his daughter. "You have betrayed him!"

"Non, non!" protested he. "I met the Constable Craddock and he wormed it out of me! Constable, ees it not so? Then the sergeant overtook us!"

"Take that girl away!" roared MacQuillan. "Emile, you're her father! D'ye hear? Take yer bairn awa'!"

"You will not!" She pushed Willis violently back.



"Annette!" her father cried.

"Y're responsible to the law!" bellowed MacQuillan.

Craddock, his eyes on Billy's eyes, cried warning: "I'll fire! By God, I'll fire!"

Savardé strode forward, distraught, and pulled at his daughter's arm.

"No!" she cried out now with a new voice—a voice of high command and splendid indignation. "I say you weel not! Is it that you are afraid he will hang up all three of you like the bacon?"

This was too much for Staff Sergeant MacQuillan. He went completely insane. The wholesome anger abruptly left his face, which froze into a dreadful and ironic grin. The fine reverberation of his roar gave way to a metallic note that clanged like steel upon an anvil. His manner became icily polite.

"Dinna ye mind them, Willis," clanked his voice in command. "We'll forego the manacles."

The girl turned to him impulsively. He forestalled her.

"Nay, dinna fash yerself, Annette," he snapped; "I can see it was a grand mistake I'm makin'. I thought I had to do with a common criminal." It was notable that he did not put up his gun.

"Then you confess he is innocent?" she cried, bewildered.

"Nay, not that. But I see we've caught one of the nobility."

He turned to Savardé.

"Emile," he said, his fine irony ringing grimly in the room, "harness up a buckboard and put in such horses as a king should use; for he is not the man to treat slightly. I'd have him ride his own bit pony, only I misdoubt she is too poor flesh for a nobleman—and she runs down cut banks something uncanny."

Emile looked at him in bewilderment, as did the two red coats, and Annette; for fantasy was not the sergeant's metier. Only Billy gazed upon MacQuillan at that moment with anything of fellow feeling. Billy smiled; this mood was Billy's meat.

"Dinna stand gapin', then!" exploded MacQuillan suddenly. "Did ye no hear me say?"

"But yes!" protested Savardé. "It will

be but a moment." And he departed to do the sergeant's bidding.

MacQuillan turned to the prisoner. His ironic calm returned.

"Ye will give us yer pardon, I'm hoping, that we have no proper place to ask ye to wait?" he said.

Billy smiled appreciatively, his eyes never ceasing to watch the guns surrounding him. Time was pressing.

"Admiral," he said, "don't apologize. If you want to make me happy, just put up all this hardware. One's enough."

The sergeant's grim smile tightened.

"I wouldn't insult yer wi' less than three," he explained. "Moreover, one might go off."

"One might," said Billy, pointedly.

"Will ye no sit down?" requested the sergeant.

"No. I'll wait here."

But a fair and delectable idea had entered the mind of Staff Sergeant MacQuillan.

"Ah, but ye'll find it weary," he said. "I've a better place for waiting."

He turned to a door that led to the interior.

"Bring the prisoner with me," he instructed the red-coated constables. And keeping Billy, whose hands were still aloft, before them, they followed him into Annette's bower beneath the stairway. The sergeant turned to his prisoner with a smile; it was a master stroke.

In this restricted apartment, manacles were surely superfluous, for Annette had furnished it entirely with her brilliant and highly artistic collection of cushions. Here Billy was surrounded by every variety of them. There were round cushions and square cushions. There were fair, dark, and flaming cushions. There were large, small, light, and heavy cushions.

There was neither chair nor table nor any other thing which could be turned to use as a weapon. With vast complacency Staff Sergeant MacQuillan ushered Billy into this cushioned recess and turned to him and smiled.

"Will ye recline?" he asked, and indicated the great pile of upholstery under the ascending stairs, which marked Annette's

supremest achievement in needlework and furniture. It was multi-colored and enticing.

"I don't mind," grinned Billy, and abruptly threw himself upon the cushioned divan.

"Ye'll like yer feet up, maybe?" Billy inclined his head. "Willis, do ye put a hassock under the gentleman's feet."

Willis, catching the sergeant's humor, obeyed, while for a moment but two guns covered Billy's reclining form.

"Annette, ye'd best go and help yer father," adjured the sergeant.

Annette sweeping them with a look of fiery scorn, obeyed without a word, and Billy was left alone with his tormentors.

"Ye canna think of anything ye need?" questioned MacQuillan icily.

"A chew of fine cut tobacco," suggested Billy.

"I'm sorry," replied the sergeant, "but that can only be had by thievery."

"Which is why so few folks hereabouts use it, I suppose," said Billy.

"It's a strong tobacco," remarked Willis. "Its use sometimes proves fatal, Mr. MacKreagh."

"Then pass me a cigarette," suggested Billy.

Craddock, his revolver in one hand, slipped forth a cigarette case, and proffered it to Billy with the other.

"Just like they do in stories," commented the pleased recipient of this favor. "A match, Salvatore." Craddock held the light for him.

"Yer sure you're comfortable?" solicited the sergeant.

"I would be if I had one of them round dofunnies under my arm." He indicated a firm round bolster, tightly clad in orange satin. The wish was father to the service. The sergeant himself placed the bolster at Billy's elbow.

"And now," murmured Billy, "just prop my feet a little higher."

Willis, with a ready cushion, leaned forward to do this service.

"Lay down," said Billy.

With these words he shot a foot forcefully into Willis's stomach, hurling him across the room. At the same time he

whirled the heavy bolster across the front of the other two red coats with devastating effect. Craddock's revolver clattered to the floor. The sergeant, a wrist twisted, but game, fired; but at the instant he pulled the trigger, a softer cushion limply and forcibly struck the muzzle of his gun. The shot went wild.

The sergeant swore. Craddock stooped for his gun. Thereupon cushions became a pestilence and an abomination. The air was filled with them, and Billy moved like a flame. He leaped to his feet, a cushion in either hand, bashed Craddock to the floor again with one, and made for the stairs.

Willis, however, regaining his feet, headed him off. Billy's remaining cushion, a pink one, with azure dots, whizzed through the air. It struck Willis's gun at the instant of its explosion, whipped it from his hand, and with it sailed across the room. Craddock, rising, caught it on the side of his face.

"Oh, God!" blurted Craddock, and sank to his knees with blood streaming through the hand which clutched his head.

Sergeant MacQuillan tore at Billy's collar and presented his gun, but Billy leaped aside and struck out with the first cushion that came to hand. It was a square one and a heavy one. He swung with all his might, and it dashed the sergeant's head aside with that sickening sidewise pull, which only a cushion, mightily swung, can deal with full effect.

The sergeant sank down limply on the bottom stair, and Craddock, with bloody head, dashed blindly past him to take MacQuillan's gun and hold the stairs. Billy plunged forward, his mighty cushion well in hand. He dashed it at the red coat's face, but Craddock dodged and fired—into the cushion, which Billy had instantly regained. The stairs barred, Billy turned from Craddock and, vaulting the banister, landed on the pile of cushions beneath.

"We're losing him again!" roared the sergeant. There was the pathos of despair in his voice.

Among that pile of cushions Willis was wildly groping for his gun, and Billy narrowly missed him with his heels on landing.



Willis rose up to close with him. At the same time MacQuillan, drawing Billy's own gun from his pocket, took aim from the newel post, and Craddock rushed down the stairs like a wounded bull.

Billy whirled his great cushion high above his head to smite Willis down, and the feathers rushed out in a cloud through the rent that the bullet had made. MacQuillan got them in the face, and catching a quick breath, was choked with them. Craddock, his aim ruined, fired into space; and Willis received the full force of Billy's blow on one side of his head, reeled, and was snapped back again by the return.

Then Billy turned from him only long enough to batter Craddock down with a long bolster. Craddock, bleeding, and dazed, tried to fire upon Billy, but his pistol arm was thrown hither and yon. He then tried to crawl away from the ridiculous punishing blows, and Billy followed the miserable man, belaboring him until his gun fell from his hand, and he to the floor in collapse.

"We'll lose him!" sobbed MacQuillan. He was seriously choking, gasping and striving for breath against the newel post. Billy stopped only long enough to rend one cushion asunder and dash twin handfuls of feathers into the sergeant's face.

"They're fine cut," he cried jovially, and he swung on Willis with a soft, loose purple one, just in time to prevent him from picking up Craddock's gun. A cushion in each hand, now, he dashed Willis's head from side to side for a moment, saw from the tail of his eye the sergeant coming back, and Craddock uprising from the floor.

He saw also the door open and Emile himself appear, so he hit Emile squarely with the purple one, smashed Craddock to the ground again with an apple green creation in moiré silk, and, scooping up the mattress, which was the foundation of the divan, turned on the sergeant with it. MacQuillan retreated up the stairs and fired twice through the mattress before it overtook him.

Billy dropped one end of it behind the sergeant, and by a vigorous shove, tripped MacQuillan up so that he fell backward into the mattress. Then Billy rolled the

mattress down the stairs with the sergeant inside. He picked up a last armful of cushions as Willis and Emile rushed forward, and tore one of them open as he bounded up the stairs.

"Breathe deep!" he laughed, and dashed the feathery contents into their upturned faces. They recoiled, and he turned to make the top of the stairs three steps at a time. There he turned again and flung cushion after cushion down upon them.

They were beaten by cushions in the face and about the legs. They were blinded by cushions, and cushions swung them from their balance. They trod on cushions, and breathed feathers. They staggered through cushions. They lost the feel of the stairs beneath their feet. They tripped and fell—into a sea of cushions.

And Billy bounded lightly through the upper corridor, burst through a window at the end of it, slipped to the ground below, and was mounted and away before his pursuers had again breathed the outside air. He rode to the rear of Savardé's barn and crouched in the shadows there, listening, while the red coats rushed forth and galloped away to look for him in the open country where he should have been, but was not.

Then he boldly reëntered the house by the front door, apologized adequately for the damaged pillows, borrowed a revolver from Annette and cantered off at his leisure.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE SERGEANT'S MOVE.

IN the dark night and a black fury, Staff Sergeant MacQuillan rode in pursuit of Smiling Billy Argent. Constables Willis and Craddock rode with him. They stopped at Sleepy River only long enough to get fresh horses and to free Supernumerary Constable Flynn from his arrest. With harsh words MacQuillan sent that victim of circumstances, over which Billy had enjoyed complete control, post haste back to the Savardé ranch.

"Sit there with yer gun in yer hand and yer eyes open!" roared the sergeant. "If

he comes back there and gets away again, I'll have ye out of the force and cleanin' harness for a pastime!"

Then, hell for leather, and devil help the hindmost, he rode with the two constables into the southwest. He hardly expected that he would overtake Billy in this wild ride, which was just as well, for Billy was at that moment asleep in a hay rick some fourteen miles behind him; but the sergeant did expect to close every door that might offer Billy succor or assistance.

The sergeant had now set out to pursue Billy in what is colloquially known as grim earnest, and it is an interesting sidelight upon the history of that pursuit that MacQuillan implicitly trusted Billy to remain in Canada while he chased him. It never occurred to the sergeant that the Texan might ride across the border; and it never occurred to Billy either.

The three red coats came thundering up the cañon to the Widow MacKreagh's homestead in the pink of the morning. With a constable covering the front, and another the rear of the house, and with his revolver in his hand, MacQuillan entered wrathfully. Mrs. MacKreagh came forth in a flannel dressing gown, whereupon the good sergeant's blushes outdid the glory of his tunic. He quelled them.

"Ye've been harboring an outlaw!" he said sternly.

"Good Glory, sergeant! I thought there was something the matter!" exclaimed the widow.

"Matter enough, woman. He's given us the slip."

She clucked sympathetically.

"You mean you've lost your horse?"

MacQuillan flushed deeply.

"Cheat the devil!" he roared. "Are they all daft, entirely?"

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"There's a murderer out on the country side! The crown rides hell bent for him, and ye help him get awa'! Isn't that matter enough? D'ye ken we can have ye jailed for it?"

"Bless my soul!" quoth Mrs. MacKreagh with asperity. "Is all this business of getting folks up in the night and shouting loud enough to wake the dead, to

say nothing of the living, and Lord knows the boy needs his sleep, for he's growing, just like his father did, all because of that poor young man who came in and helped me to break five horses that wouldn't be broken to this day if he hadn't, and the notes due at the bank, too.

"Shame on you, Mr. MacQuillan, that boy is no more a murderer than you or me, and I'd ask you to place me in jail if you dare. Taking out your spite on the widow and orphan when you ought to be getting the man you're after instead of playing about on your night rides and morning visits."

MacQuillan felt no less baffled by this deluge of words because the dauntless lady's eyes sparkled humorously while she outpoured it.

"I want no talk about it, madam," he replied with dignity.

"And tell that young man who's disturbing my chickens at the back, that next time he's on duty he'll do better not to loaf about folks' houses for breakfast when the man he's chasing is a smarter man than he is. Will you stay to breakfast, sergeant?"

"I have work to do." Sergeant MacQuillan enlisted a heavy severity as his ally. "You have harbored a man who is wanted by the police, Mrs. MacKreagh, and are guilty, moreover, of assisting him to escape. If we get him, the matter may be overlooked. If not, I don't see what can be done to defend ye."

"Leave that to me, sergeant."

But the sergeant seemed moody and pre-occupied. He looked upon her darkly.

"Craddock!" he bellowed.

Craddock entered at his call.

"You will stay in this house, Craddock," ordered the sergeant. "Mrs. MacKreagh will see that you are made comfortable, and you will provide yourself with the necessary provisions, sending in a requisition for the outlay. You will not leave this place until further orders, and if Argent comes here you will arrest him on sight."

MacQuillan turned to the lady with gloomy triumph in his eyes. "I shall count on you, Mrs. MacKreagh, to make Constable Craddock comfortable," he said.

"Bless the boy!" cried Mrs. MacKreagh,



Unexpectedly turning upon her offspring who was trying to press into the room behind her. "Why must you poke yourself into the affairs of your betters? Of course, sergeant, I shall treat Mr. Craddock as well as I treated Mr. Willis. I don't have favorites."

"Now, young man," again she addressed her son, "get right outside and finish whitewashing that corral. You ought to have another section done before breakfast, and then you'll have to go over to Redstone for supplies, because Mr. Craddock says he'll stay with us for a few days."

So, when MacQuillan and Constable Willis took to their horses again, they found Smedley MacKreagh diligently whitewashing the fence of the corral. And that is why Billy, warily approaching the brim of the cañon on foot that afternoon, saw the danger signal of the gleaming whitewash, turned away from the MacKreagh homestead and took up his abode in a shack at the mouth of the cañon where he could see all who entered or emerged, and could, incidentally, waylay the youthful Smedley as he rode forth on errands for his mother.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### BILLY COUNTERS.

**B**ILLY lived at the mouth of the cañon for two days before he called upon the eager services of the son of the Widow MacKreagh. Smedley enjoyed his part immensely, and would have liked to have had something harder to do than invent excuses for riding past the mouth of the cañon. He quickly learned to regard the unfortunate Constable Craddock as a bitter enemy, and himself as the heroic spy of a persecuted cause, and this attitude complicated matters for Craddock immeasurably.

He never knew what he would find in his bed when he retired, and Smedley, moreover, was given to false alarms. Craddock walked into a tub of water twice in one night, rushing from the house to capture an imaginary Billy; Smedley's strategy consisting of placing the tub outside the door for the constable's exit, and inside to

meet him coming back. Also, Constable Craddock bruised his shin.

Constable Craddock now looked on life with decreasing cheerfulness. He became a veritable wet blanket about the house. He moped. On the afternoon of the second day Mrs. MacKreagh spoke to him about his dejected demeanor.

"You ought to get out and play with Smedley!" said Mrs. MacKreagh. "Mr. Argent used to."

But Smedley was not present at the time to be played with, and, anyhow, the idea did not appeal to the constable. Smedley was not present, because with high glee he had learned that Billy was in need of food. So he had taken a bucket and gone down the cañon to "look for berries in the swamp." And the bucket contained three days' provisions for one man.

Billy did not really live in the shack at the end of the cañon. He merely made it his strategic headquarters. He ate there, but was too wise to sleep there. He preferred to endure the cold winds of the night in a clump of brush above the shack, where he made a camp and concealed his Concho. From this eminence he could watch all who approached or, if any approached unseen, remain concealed.

On this afternoon he was perched at the edge of his screening thicket, awaiting the arrival of Smedley with the sinews of war, when he observed a lonely man mounted upon a dejected horse, which ambled lazily into the cañon. The rider slouched carelessly in the saddle and the horse suggested that the rider's carelessness was justified.

Billy watched him as he struck the cañon trail, and observed that for all his apparent nonchalance, the rider had the sharp eye of an old ranger for every detail of the scenery. Billy could detect that before he could see the man's face, and he drew swiftly back into the thicket as he saw the rider's attention dwell upon the shack.

"Sees smoke," Billy informed himself. "Looks like he knows."

The rider apparently had done precisely that, for, having pulled in his mount, he sat for a moment silently regarding the inanimate building. At that moment young Smedley swung into view, loping down the

trail with his bucket. Billy heard the rider's voice and saw the boy come to a guilty halt, surprised. Billy took his gun from its holster, examined it carefully, and replaced it, making sure it was loose to his pull.

"Guess we'll talk," he reflected, and sauntered down through the bushes.

"Where you bound for, young feller?" the rider had asked the boy.

"Berryin'," the bright youth had responded.

"Fer how long?" the rider had asked.

"Till dinner time," answered the pride of Mrs. MacKreagh.

"An' where you going to eat dinner?" pressed the rider.

"Home," said Smedley.

"Then why you carryin' it in that pail?"

Smedley gazed into the bucket as if he could not believe his eyes.

"That?" said he. "That? That ain't dinner."

"No. It's about five dinners."

"Your wrong, mister. It's a good six," said the boy frankly. "I thought likely I might camp out."

"You're a bright boy. In that shack?"

"Yup."

"Your mother wouldn't like that," guessed the rider.

"She won't know."

"I'm going to see her now," announced the rider. He screwed up a wrinkled countenance in pleasant ambiguity. But Smedley was not to be bluffed.

"Good-by," he said and turned away.

"Oh, I'm in no hurry. Thought I'd take a look at the shack."

By this time, Billy, who had been an interested listener, had recognized his man.

"Come right in, Mr. Breen," he said, stepping forward.

"So that's the lay," remarked Mr. Breen, and his wrinkled visage shriveled into a leer of friendly triumph. "I knew something queer was sort of simmering."

"Fall off an' be friends," suggested Billy.

Mr. Breen dismounted and solemnly shook Billy's hand.

"I could collect a reward for you," he said quizzically.

"Don't be so pessimistic," said Billy.

"You got a good many years to live yet."

"Young feller, I told you on Monday that you were good. I meant it. I know you. You're good as gold. But you're ruining another man, young feller; and he's just as good a man as you are. He's good. MacQuillan's as good as they make 'em."

Having delivered himself of this information, Mr. Breen turned once more to the dejected animal which had brought him. He threw the reins.

"I've got to see your mother about them horses I bought," he said to Smedley. "That black fiend she sold me's worth double what I paid and I aim to make it right. You want to ride behind?"

The boy looked at Billy. Billy strode to the head of Breen's horse and grasped the bridle.

"If you want to help the sergeant, Mr. Breen," he said, "just you tell that painted soldger up at the ranch that I'm campin' here."

Breen puckered up his face at that.

"It ain't that, young feller," he said.

"As far as squealing goes, I haven't laid eyes on you since I saw you ride north from Redstone on Monday. But MacQuillan's a good man, and we need him. I wouldn't be surprised but what it would be nice if you sort of rode over the border until MacQuillan managed to get that cattle lifting blackleg named Menzies. If he don't get one or the other of you, and get him quick, he'll bust a blood vessel or get a transfer.

"It ain't right, because MacQuillan's good. You're just helpin' the lowest sort of scum to break a good man, playin' with MacQuillan this way. Get aboard, youngster."

He was in the saddle now and pulling Smedley up behind him, but Billy caught the boy about the middle and plucked him from his place.

"Smedley an' me," he said, "we're talkin'."

Breen screwed up his face at them.

"So-long," he squeaked and, vigorously kicking his lethargic mount, he ambled on his way.

After he was out of sight Billy took the boy and the bucket into his brush clad fastness.



"Smed," he explained, "we're goin' to write letters."

Again was wrapping paper forthcoming and again did Billy's stub of a pencil do its service. In the fields of literature Billy was not a frequent wayfarer, but he possessed a trenchant style in letters and found no difficulty in expressing his mind with such an instrument as the stubby pencil provided him. He scribbled industriously for some moments, looking up occasionally to meet the sympathetic and rotund eyes of the boy with the abstract gaze of his own constructive thought, and thereupon to break into a grin which suggested that what he wrote amused him.

The labor finished, he ransacked his blanket roll and brought forth a crumpled but virgin envelope. He frowned thoughtfully.

"The sergeant, Buddy; what's his first name?" he asked.

"You mean Staff Sergeant MacQuillan?"

"Bright boy. That's whatever."

"You want to know what his name is?"

Billy smiled his approval.

"When you grow up," he said, "you'll be a college professor or card sharp or something. That's just exactly what I wanted to know. His first name."

"Well, I don't know it."

"I was wrong. You'll be a Congressman of the United States."

"Prob'ly he ain't got a first name."

"Prob'ly yore wrong. Everybody's got a first name. They come when you're a baby, like measles."

"I'll bet it's a Scotch one, like Andrew or Abraham."

Billy frowned thoughtfully.

"I'd like to know his first name a lot. I want to write out this envelope all polite and proper."

"Look for one of them signs."

"What signs?"

"Them warning signs for Menzies an'—an' people like that."

Billy grinned.

"Son, yore tactful. But I ain't people like that in any way, shape, manner, or description."

"Oh, I didn't meant it that way." Smedley flushed.

Billy laughed outright.

"It's all high up and good to look at, buddy," he cried. "You gave me just the right play."

From his pocket he drew the advertisement he had torn from the side of Tazewell's store. There was the alarm for his arrest, there was the libelous description of himself and Concho, and there below it all, was the signature: "Balwhider MacQuillan, Staff Sergeant, R. N. W. M. P."

With a widening grin, Billy scribbled the title on his envelope, and then, going back to his wrapping paper, he crossed out the salutation of "Dear Sarge," and with his stub of a pencil indited in bold characters above it, a new, and more blithesome greeting.

"Dear Baldy—" he wrote.

"When yore writing a friendly letter," he abjured Smedley, "let it sound a heap friendly, right orf the muzzle." He sealed the envelope neatly and gave it to the boy. "You take that to the sergeant first orf in the morning," he said.

Smedley's bright countenance clouded.

"But he'll hold me."

Billy frowned.

"If he holds you, come back and tell me about it," he said ominously.

He watched Smedley depart with the impish expression of a Texas cowboy, unburdened with care, who anticipates with great pleasure his little moment of happiness. Or, to put it in another way, Billy was planning for trouble.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### A VERRA LUCKY MAN.

ANNETTE had come to the Sleepy River post of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police with the laudable intention of interceding with Justice in behalf of an innocent man. She was not welcome, but Staff Sergeant MacQuillan was trying to be polite to her.

"You are so stupid," she had informed him frankly.

"Ye dinna flatter him when ye say that," he replied. "I'll say this for yer friend, if I be stupid or no stupid he could still

have had the better of me with all the tobacco gone. He's a sly devil."

"Then why do you worry him so? Leave him alone and he will leave you alone. You make him do these things."

The sergeant gazed upon her wearily.

"Ye dinna understand. He is wanted by the police."

"Oh, wanted by the police!" she mimicked him. "He would not be wanted by the police if you did not so stupidly want him!"

Her logic amazed MacQuillan without convincing him.

"Annette," he admonished her, "ye'll do well to stay out of this. It is a man's game and I must do my duty. Stay out of it, lassie, or ye'll fall foul of the law yersel'."

Her dark eyes flashed upon him darkly.

"Sarjon!" she cried with a piquant scorn. "You once came to me and said that you were my friend. Do you remember that day; that evening?"

He frowned and nodded. He remembered well enough. "More than friend," was the expression he had used. Ever a man of reserve, he didn't like this turn the talk was taking.

"Ver' well," she summed the matter succinctly. "Now I come to you and tell you of a thing a friend can do to assist me. I ask you to help. And then you make me a threat. Ees that the friendliness you meant?"

"Will the girl never stop talking?" asked MacQuillan of the empty air. "Ye will not have the right of it, Annette, so what's the use? I tell you that my job is to have this callant, if I comb all Canada for him. He is a criminal, can ye no grasp that? To me he is a criminal, and I must have him."

"And I must prosecute all and any who give him succor. So stay out of it as I have told ye. Ye've broken laws enough now to place ye in the jail."

At that she rose from her chair and, stepping forward, placed her hands upon his table and leaned across it toward him, her brown eyes very earnest.

"And I tell you that I cannot stay out!" she said. "You said that you would be more than a friend to me, Sergeant Mac-

Quillan. Well, we cannot decide those things for ourselves, and I could not say yes. But this man, eet was decided for me; he ees more than a friend to me. He ees like his name—Argent; sterling silver—and I love him! I cannot stay out of it, for this Billee ees my—my more than friend!"

Then, to the everlasting credit of the scarlet, Staff Sergeant MacQuillan arose and grasped the girl's strong young hand.

"Aye!" he rumbled in rich sincerity. "Aye, Annette. I know. I've long thocht 'twas so. I know, I know."

She drew back, relieved.

"And that ees why I say you must leave him alone," she said. "He ees good. He ees innocent of any crime."

"Aye," said MacQuillan. "Aye. It does ye credit, Annette. It does ye great credit to speak for him."

She smiled radiantly upon him, happy in this new understanding.

"Then we are good friends?" she pleaded.

"Aye."

"And he also ees your good friend?"

MacQuillan grinned.

"Aye. I've ever had a liking for the man."

He escorted her to the door, opening it that she might pass.

"You and Billee," she murmured happily. "You are good friends."

"Aye. It's sorry I am that I've got to run him down."

She wheeled.

"But you are friends!"

He frowned, hopeless of reconciling this woman to his staid philosophy.

"And I am also a staff sergeant of the Mounted Police," he pointed out.

She concentrated upon him a look of bitter scorn and something akin to dislike.

"You-oo-oo-oo-oo!" she cried; and that is when Smedley came in.

MacQuillan pounced upon the boy as if he himself were a drowning man and Smedley the proverbial straw.

"What is it, laddie?" he cried.

"A letter for Sergeant MacQuillan," announced the ardent youth. He literally shoved the missive into the sergeant's hand and turned for the door. But MacQuillan,



having seized the paper, changed his place with singular agility and blocked the exit.

"Another who is 'more than friend,'" he informed Annette dryly.

Smedley turned pale and stood shuffling his feet in the middle of the room while MacQuillan read the letter. He read it carefully and slowly, then without a word, handed it to Annette.

"Wait for an answer," he ordered the boy, and turned to pace the floor. Smedley grinned with relief and waited. Annette read the letter. It said:

DEAR BALDY:

They tell me if you don't get Menzies, you lose your job. If you lose your job, I'll lose mine, which is riding herd on you and Willy-boy. I see there's a reward of one hundred dollars on this Menzies, which is more than he's worth. If you'll promise to keep your hobbles off me, and let me ride away as free as I come, I'll deliver him to you on the hoof Thursday night, and we can flip a nickel for the hundred. Please answer by bearer, who will return herewith.

Very respectfully yours,

WILLIAM O'BRIEN ARGENT.

Annette chuckled happily.

"There!" she cried. "But ees he not splendid! He will bring this Menzies in for you!"

But the sergeant had sunk into his chair at the table, and was gloomily regarding the far distance.

"A week!" he groaned. "Three of such like in one week!"

And there were other of Billy's little tricks to be remembered. For Sergeant MacQuillan the future promised nothing joyful. It appeared dreary; even bleak.

She placed the missive before him on the table.

"But you will not refuse?" she pressed him.

He turned his gloomy countenance to the fragment of wrapping paper. He reread

Billy's jaunty note and admired the spirit of it. He read it again; and smiled.

"Aye," he said. "I'll play the man's game with him. If he brings Menzies in, I'm a winner. If he fails, and I misdoubt but he will, there'll be something in life to laugh at." He jerked pen into the inkwell, and wrote furiously but neatly on the neat letterhead of the Mounted, thus:

MR. WILLIAM O'BRIEN ARGENT:

Dear Sir—Received your kind offer of even date, I shall be pleased to accept the terms set forth by you. I shall expect delivery of the man, Menzies, on Thursday evening before 10 P.M.

BALWHIDER MACQUILLAN, Staff Sergeant,  
R. N. W. M. P.

P. S.—In the flipping of coins, I shall provide the nickel.  
B MACQ.

He folded the neat epistle, enveloped it and addressed the envelope.

"Ye will take it back to your friend," he instructed the boy, who departed whistling; and then MacQuillan turned to discover Annette gazing upon him with a troubled cloud upon her brow.

"Sergeant MacQuillan," she said, "you have not done this to trap him?"

MacQuillan again opened the door for her and, grasping her hand, led her into the sunlit doorway. His impassive, handsome face, his steel blue eyes, were charged with a certain dignity. She was conscious of it.

"Annette," he said, "must ye dislike me as much as that?"

And she was immediately penitent.

"No, no!" she assured him, impulsively. "I am sorry. It is only that I have such fears for him."

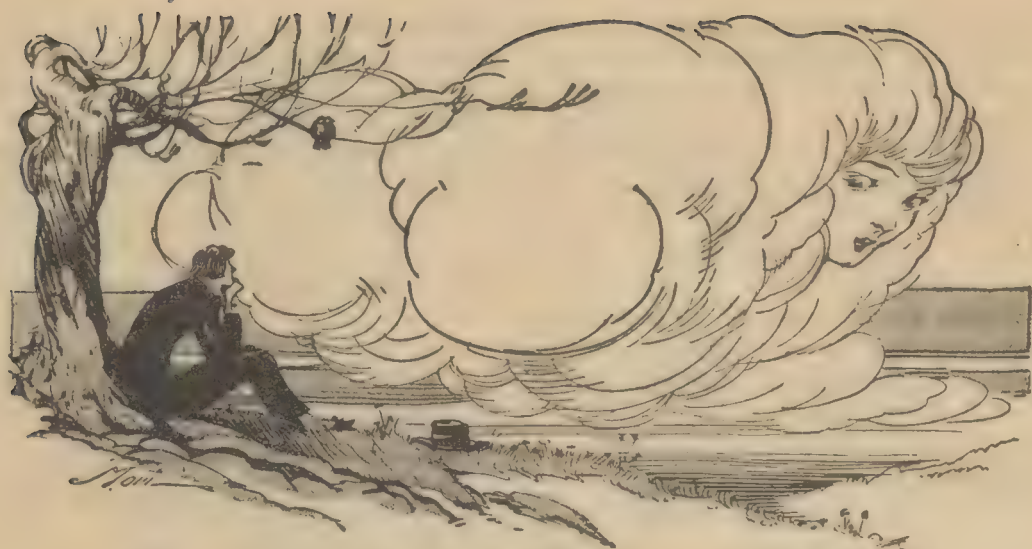
"Then I will tell ye this," Sergeant MacQuillan. "If he should be guilty, and if we should ride the heart out of him, and bring him to the gallows for his crime, he would still be a lucky man. A verra lucky man."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



DARK O' THE MOON - BY BERTHA LOWRY GWYNNE

one of the most engaging love stories we have ever printed, will be next week's Novelette. Its heroine is a delight and the quarrel scene a gem.



# Adolph's Cloud of Glory

By REITA LAMBERT

IT was an eventful day for Madeline Van Kirk when Adolph Baldwin came to Newton Center. Madeline was twenty, a visionary young person with the sleek, dark head of a Goya, the emotional inhibitions of a timid Romanticist and the finical scruples of a Puritan. The sort of young girl that nice old ladies dote on.

She lived the uneventful existence of a mid-Victorian maiden in placid Newton Center, helped her mother with the dishes, made her own clothes and played a quiescent part in the activities of the younger set. Such were her physical pursuits. Mentally and spiritually, she lived and had her being among the nebulous knights and ladies of the days when Ninevah was a fishing village. Doubtless, the psychoanalysts would have had things to say about Madeline, but, fortunately, they never had the chance.

It was at a discreet party given by Jane Waters that Madeline met Adolph. "Be sure and come, dear, we're going to have an A. T.," Jane had announced over the telephone. And in response to Madeline's in-

terested query as to what an "A. T." was, "artistic temperament," Jane had explained with a triumphant giggle.

The A. T. proved to be Adolph Baldwin. Adolph was a poet by admission and avocation. He need scarcely have taken the trouble to admit it. Adolph looked like a poet. He was an elongated young man who spent even less on barbers than he did on his food. The results of this economy were striking. Adolph's hair was forever falling over his eyes and there was a concave hiatus between his belt and cravat that was svelte and esthetic in the extreme. His eyes were large, dark and hungry.

Like Madeline, Adolph moved in a nebulous world of dreams, but he was far from inarticulate. It was Adolph's custom to lasso his dreams and set them in poetic frames. Sonnets, rondeaus, elegies, ballads, and monodies—all these served to immortalize Adolph's Parnassian fancies. In this amaranthine form they became, straightway, tireless peripatetics endowed by their author with a perpetual return ticket, which they never failed to use.



When Adolph met Madeline at Jane Water's party; when his perennially gloomy gaze encountered those brooding gray eyes of hers, he told himself that here was a soul attuned to his own. And it was not long before he was telling Madeline the same thing. Adolph was like that—an opportunist. He possessed the courage of his emotions.

Jane's house was on the outskirts of the town with a front porch that looked out over a neat lawn and a tree or two. Here the poet led Madeline: Here he told her presently that her eyes were unplumbed wells of enchantment. Madeline's cheeks grew pink and she dropped her lashes over the wells.

"Will you tell me your name?" asked Adolph eagerly. "Your first name—please?"

"My name is Madeline," she said softly and there was an illicit flutter in her throat.

The poet's face was transfigured by a beatific smile.

"Madeline!" he exulted. "I might have known. Sweet dreamer of St. Agnes Eve! If mine were only Porphyro!"

Madeline knew her Keats, too. She tingled pleasantly from the tips of her small pumps to the center part of her sleek little dark head. This indeed was the converse of her dream chevaliers. The incident served to bridge the polite preliminaries that lie between an introduction and the perfect concord of friendship. It established a bond between them, and it was not long before Adolph was pouring his life's story into Madeline's attentive ear: the story of a frustrated soul, sentenced from birth to the chilly Siberia of incomprehension.

Adolph, it appeared, was a year out of college; a four years' incarceration insisted upon by undiscerning parents whose ambitions for him included the necessity of his making his own living. Madeline gathered that Adolph had come through the ordeal brilliantly with a sheepskin under one arm, a packed portfolio of iambics under the other and as little knowledge of the grosser necessities of life as he could possibly get past with. After his graduation there had been the offer of a post in his father's business.

He explained that his father was I. Baldwin, president of Baldwin & Co., makers of Dyemwhite, 'It Cleans White Shoes Clean!' and sundry meritorious articles closely associated with boots and shoes. Adolph, it seemed, had refused the offer with dignity. How, he had inquired, could he give his best efforts to the support of Dyemwhite and still be fair to his muse! And he must be fair to the gift which had been intrusted to his care by some divine agency and which he could not desert—even for the undoubted attractions of Dyemwhite!

Instead of being impressed by this logical ratiocination, Adolph's father had flown into a dreadful rage, had called his son's Calliope "damned nonsense" and instead of offering to finance Adolph's worthy expedition in search of fame, had, as he so tritely expressed it, "washed his hands of the fatuous young pup."

Adolph had accepted this ultimatum without demur and, armed with the fat portfolio, his toothbrush and shaving things, set out with the intention of consecrating his life to art and posterity. The path, thus chosen, had not, he confided to Madeline, been strewn with roses. The exactions of a normal appetite had forced him finally to barter his services for a weekly stipend. He had, in short, as a means to an end, held down a job—many jobs, in fact. At present he was selling neckties in a gentleman's haberdashery on Main Street.

"And—and your poetry?" prompted Madeline timidly.

Somehow, Adolph had to get it across that, to date, he had been unable to make any one share his own enthusiasm for the contents of the portfolio.

"You must remember," he said sadly, "that we are living in a commercial era. I cannot prostitute my art to fit the sordid pattern of to-day."

Madeline was impressed. The phrase struck her as both unique and heroic. Here was a man whose footsteps were following the impress bequeathed him by departed martyrs.

"But you're sure to get your reward," she comforted him gently. "Some day you will be recognized."

"Perhaps," admitted Adolph with a tinge of bitterness, "when I am dead. Not," he added for fear she might think him selfish, "that I look for a reward. I write because I must—for the sheer love of my art."

To do him justice, Adolph was not unduly egotistic. But when a young man is in love he talks about himself. When an old man is in love he talks about the object of his passion. Not that Adolph knew he was in love. He only knew that there was a perfect and beautiful unanimity between them.

As for Madeline, she thought him magnificent. Through the evening while the majority of Jane's guests danced in her denuded parlor to the jazz records, Adolph and Madeline sat out on the porch and disinterred the latent treasures of their innermost souls. It was Adolph who escorted Madeline safely to her front gate and kissed her hand at parting. She had never had her hand kissed before. The usual procedure with most of the young men she knew was a scuffle in the vestibule which invariably came to nothing—for Madeline had her own ideas about promiscuous kissing that matched the crinoline and hoops in which her spirit was clothed. But having one's hand kissed was another matter. It conveyed deference, devotion and respect. It was flavorful of the dead days of chivalry. In fact, Madeline was thrilled. And, after all, the kiss reached her lips—by proxy.

## II.

ROMANCE assumes many guises. Romance came to Madeline Van Kirk in a slightly soiled soft collar and rumpled cravat. The hours that Adolph was wont to devote to his muse, he now devoted to Madeline. Together they explored the spring-invaded outskirts of Newton Center which Adolph renamed the slopes of Mount Olympus. Adolph quoted poetry and Madeline deplored the short sightedness of editors. In short, Adolph and Madeline fell in love.

Adolph had never possessed a sweetheart—a real flesh and blood sweetheart. He had worshiped, to be sure, a nebulous ideal which the modern flapper of his acquaint-

ance had never for a moment approached. Then, suddenly, he had found Madeline and straightway the vaporish lady of his dreams lost her pedestal and Madeline took possession. And Madeline had never had a beau for the simple reason that the young men she had met failed to measure up to her preconceived ideas. But in Adolph she found all the chivalry and delicate asceticism with which she had endowed her ideal.

The two came together as naturally as a couple of artless birds. They had strolled one Sunday afternoon in June to a hillside that overlooked the sooty minarets of Newton Center's industrial nave. But they were not looking at the city. They were looking into each other's eyes and gasping at what they found there. Even in Adolph's rich vocabulary there were no words worthy of the moment. Quite automatically he took her into his arms and his lips found hers ready for his kiss.

It was a timid kiss for one of Adolph's attainments and when it was over they were both trembling. With wordless unanimity they sat down in the shade of a decrepit apple tree and the poet spoke:

"Madeline—I love you!" he announced as simply—as tritely as if he were not a poet.

But then Madeline's acceptance of the simple declaration was not distinguished by any marked originality.

"Oh, Adolph!" she breathed.

"Tell me—do you love me, dear?" pressed Adolph.

"You—you *know* I do," whispered Madeline, and rebuked him with a look.

For some moments they marveled at the miracle while their two figures cast but one shadow on the grass. Adolph opined awesomely that they had been destined for each other. Madeline readily agreed with him. When they had reached this satisfactory conclusion concerning the past they came, inevitably, to the future. It offered a dismal prospect. Selling silk scarfs offered no adequate income for a prospective husband. Adolph said so, gloomily. And he had never before wanted to write so badly.

"It's my love for you, my darling," he explained. "There's something in me here"—he placed his lean hand over his



heart; if he had moved it a bit to the right, the statement would not have been an honest one, for the installment on his typewriter had been due yesterday—"something struggling for expression. I can feel the words surging up! With you to inspire me I should do a masterpiece!"

Madeline lapsed into an unhappy silence.

"I *know* you could, Adolph," she cried. "If only we could get somebody to buy your lovely things!"

"Obscurity is the price of genius," observed Adolph dreamily. "Poe paid that price and Keats and countless others."

"But now they're famous," advanced Madeline hopefully.

"Death is an inimitable press agent," said Adolph sagely. "Posterity may be kinder to me."

But strangely enough this vague eventuality failed to comfort Madeline.

"What good will that do us?" she inquired sadly.

"None, darling," said Adolph cheerfully, and patted her hand. "For that reason I must turn my thoughts to the present. I *must* have you. To have you I must enter the commercial field in earnest!"

This, Madeline recognized, was Adolph's manner of saying that he must get a job that would do more than pay for his stamps and attic room. She sighed. Adolph was relinquishing his career for her! Womanlike, she reveled for a moment in her triumph. Womanlike also, now that he had made the tentative sacrifice, she rose in rebellion against the necessity.

"Oh, my dear, I can't let you give up your art for me!"

"My precious," declared Adolph with unaffected ardor, "I would rather have you than the fame of Rossetti, Shelley, and Byron all rolled into one!"

That settled it for Madeline. She began to polish up all her latent strategic forces.

"There must be some way you could have *both*," she said resolutely, and fixed a meditative gaze on the sooty spires erected in a less worthy cause.

Suddenly Adolph's sagacious remarks anent Poe and Keats and the "countless others" came ambling through her mind. The poverty gnawed efforts of these men

had brought them posthumous fame. If something tragic were to happen to Adolph, if he were to be cut off in the flush of his promising youth, she supposed the world would presently resound with his praises. The thought took her breath, but she voiced it quickly before it would have a chance to escape her.

"Adolph!"

"Darling!" responded Adolph promptly.

"Adolph, dear—I've got it!" She was wide-eyed with excitement.

"Your eyes," declared her lover ardently, "are wonderful!"

"But, Adolph, you must listen!"

"To your voice," agreed Adolph, "I've heard it in my dreams, I've heard it—"

"Adolph, you must go away—you must die!"

The poet was startled, more than startled—he was appalled. But he *was* a poet and a lover.

"Even that—for you!" he agreed.

"Pretend to," elucidated Madeline, "until you're famous. Like the war poets that nobody ever heard about until they went off and got themselves shot."

The poet's imperishable *savoir faire* began to crumble.

"My darling girl, I'm afraid I don't follow you," he admitted gently.

"Don't you *see*?" cried Madeline. "You said yourself that death was a wonderful press agent. And if nobody will buy your poems while you're alive they may—when you're dead. Isn't that perfectly logical?"

"Unanswerable," admitted Adolph readily, "but unfortunately I'm alive and life since I've found you has become very precious to me."

"But don't you see, silly," insisted Madeline when she had rewarded him for that, "you don't really have to die! You can just disappear and let them—the public—come to the conclusion that something awful has happened to you. Your disappearance will be printed in the papers and it will be rumored that you were a poet—I'll see to that—and then some publisher will publish your poems and when things are all started and people are talking, you can come back—on clouds of glory!"

She searched his startled eyes to ascer-

tain the effect her words had created and hurried on.

"My uncle Jim has a place up in the mountains. He never uses it except in August. You can go there, I'll get you the keys, and you can write—and pretend you're a friend of uncle's."

She turned an illuminated face to his. It was just such preposterous visions as these that brought Columbus out of Spain and inspired Mr. Bell in his first dingy workshop.

"Don't you see, dear, while you're hidden away up there, I'll be working for you here. Mr. Bridewell—he's the editor of the *Gazette*—will advertise your disappearance in the paper and maybe use a poem, too. And that will be just the beginning!"

While she was talking Adolph's mind was weighing the merits of her argument with a careful consideration not usual in his impulsive nature. First of all, Adolph had concluded some time since that he hated the job of selling cravats. He hated this even more than he hated the idea of espousing the cause of Dyem-white. Theoretically, Madeline's scheme was flawless. If a live poet were considered in the nature of a liability, then it was only reasonable to suppose that a dead poet might be an asset. While the expedition might not bring him fame the opportunity offered him a coveted vacation safe from intrusion. When he reached this point in his sanguine deductions, Adolph proved that he was not entirely impractical.

"But what 'll I live on, dearest?"

"There's always stacks of canned things up there," Madeline assured him. "And uncle has some cows. A farmer and his wife look after them. Perhaps they would let you have some milk. It is primitive, dear, but I think you could manage without too much discomfort. Oh, Adolph, *will* you do it?"

"My first poem shall be for you," said Adolph dreamily. "A poem to my love, such a poem as Strephon might have written to his Chloe."

"You mustn't send any letters; they might be suspected," Madeline opined thoughtfully. "I'll attend to your mail for you down here."

"I can feel it surging within me," mused Adolph, referring to the poem.

"You shall be famous, my dear! You must give me an extra picture for the papers."

"Posterity shall know you as my guiding spirit!" cried Adolph fervently and folded her in his arms. "Ah, my darling, ours shall indeed be the perfect union, for fame will bring riches with it and we shall belong to each other—forever!"

### III.

MR. JAMES SAYLOR's summer place clung like a brown burr to the side of an undersized mountain. It was a crude but comfortable affair of unbarked logs with a smoked fireplace at one end of the great living room and an amorphous collection of ancient furniture distributed about. From a long porch flanking the rear of the house stretched an inspiring view of wooded hills peopled with scrub pines and white birches. A few hundred yards to the left stood a farmhouse almost concealed by the encompassing trees.

An inspiring situation thought Adolph Baldwin on the first morning of his voluntary exile. He was standing on the porch, like a monarch surveying his kingdom. It had been dark the night before on his arrival—an arrival made doubly gloomy by misgivings and hunger. His lamp-lit burrowings had yielded nothing better than a tin of sardines and a box of crackers. After this meager repast he had crawled dismally between the blankets on a couch in the living room. And here the mountain air had worked its sedative powers on his ill-nourished nerves and body. He had wakened feeling as if he had bathed in the fountain of Bimini—which is the way Adolph would have expressed it.

Now he breathed deep in appreciation of the peaceful scene before him. Dew lay like a silver sheet on the hills, birds trilled and katydids manipulated musical forelegs and joined the chorus of welcome. Adolph stretched lazily and thought of the wonders of nature and of Madeline—and of food. To date, his appetite had been a docile enough affair easily managed. But this



morning it was clamoring for attention in unprecedented fashion.

He went back glumly into the house, found a kitchen opening off the living room and rummaged until he found a jar marked "coffee." Then he turned to the stove, a range, with a collection of split logs in a box at its side. Clumsily Adolph filled the coal bed with paper and logs and touched a match to it. Five minutes later he stumbled back into the living room, now filled with clouds of smoke, mopping his streaming eyes. It was at this moment that he heard brisk steps on the gravel outside and trotted eagerly to the window.

"Hello, there!" he called.

A plump little woman in blue gingham, a basket on her arm, returned his greeting with a blend of cordiality and surprise.

"Howdy!" she returned. "I saw the smoke from your chimney jest as we was finishin' breakfast, and I says to Art—that's my husband—'What's Mr. Saylor doin' up here so early?' 'Better run over an' see,' says Art to me. You a friend of Mr. Saylor's?"

"Well," replied Adolph speculatively, "Elliott says that a friend is a well spring in the wilderness. If this is true, I may truthfully say that Mr. Saylor is my friend. May I introduce myself? Baldwin is my name!"

"I'm Mrs. Hopkins," she rejoined, recovering from the amaze into which his rhetoric had thrown her. "You all alone up here?"

"Save for my muse, alas, yes," admitted Adolph.

His caller decided that the word was Adolph's waggish abbreviation of some strange musical instrument and padded competently toward the door.

"I'll come along in an' fix you up," she told him.

It was not the poet's intention to question the thoughtful providence that thus provided him with a ready-made votary intent on "fixing him up." He welcomed her into the house with his most winning smile.

"You look after Mr. Saylor?" he asked.

"Goin' on twelve years now," she replied, bustling capably into the kitchen. "When

I see the smoke comin' out of his chimney I know he's back and needin' some cream and butter an' things. That's why I hurried over." She set her basket on the kitchen table and made a rush for the stove. "My land, the dampers! No wonder your stove smoked!"

"I tried," explained Adolph, "to make some coffee and succeeded only in smoking myself out of the kitchen."

"And no wonder," she exclaimed with satisfaction, "when you shut all the dampers off."

"Dampers!" breathed Adolph with an admiring glance. "Of course! And you saw what was the trouble at once. Wonderful woman!"

Mrs. Hopkins flashed him a suspicious glance that changed to a maternal smile when she encountered his guileless eyes.

"Land a-goshen!" she cried, sniffing the mixture in the coffee pot and pouring it determinedly down the sink. "What a sorry sight a man is when you put him in the kitchen! Now you jest set down while I whip up a few cakes and find some bacon. Mr. Saylor always has a side or two of bacon around. You like wheat cakes, Mr. Baldwin?"

Adolph sank weakly into a chair. He gulped hard and a hand moved involuntarily over the region of his stomach.

"Cakes!" he breathed. "Bacon! Oh, vague, forgotten words!"

The kitchen was permeated presently with the heavenly aroma of bubbling coffee, the pungent perfume of broiling bacon and browning flapjacks. Mrs. Hopkins was an aggressively skillful cook. Adolph's appealing ineffectuality acted as a spur to her prowess. He refused sturdily to be banished to a solitary, if more genteel, meal in the living room, and partook of his ambrosial repast from one end of the kitchen table.

"Now, don't you," advised Mrs. Hopkins firmly, "go messin' around tryin' to get yourself some dinner. I'll run over with some fried chicken for you around half past twelve—and, you drink milk, I suppose?"

Adolph looked up solemnly from the act of replenishing his twice devastated plate.

"I recall the beverage with pleasure," he admitted. "A white, opaque liquid, if my memory serves me—"

"Mr. Saylor's cows is in our barn," said Mrs. Hopkins. "He's got a nice Holstein and a Jersey—"

"Which, if I may ask," interrupted Adolph politely, "yields the superior product?"

"Eh?"

"I asked," elucidated Adolph patiently, "which member of your bovine family gave the richest milk?"

"Oh! The Jersey, of course."

"The Jersey, indeed!" said Adolph delightedly. "Then suppose we introduce the Jersey into our gustatory scheme."

"Into which?"

"I said, suppose you supply me with milk from the Jersey!" suggested Adolph gently.

"Sure, Mr. Baldwin, if you'd rather," agreed Mrs. Hopkins accommodatingly.

"And the chicken you spoke of," appended Adolph, growing more judicial over his third plate of cakes and bacon—"I prefer white meat, if you please."

Mrs. Hopkins nodded cheerfully.

"Well, I'll be runnin' back home now," she observed, and sprinkled a shovel of coal on the fire. "Don't you go monkeyin, with that fire, will you? I got it fixed to last till noon. I got to hurry—this is my bakin' day. Berry pies I'm makin'—berry and peach. You like berry or peach best? Or maybe you'd like some of both?"

Adolph's eyes rested upon her tenderly.

"It's extraordinary!" he cried. "Nothing less than extraordinary, the way you manage to read my innermost thoughts. How better could I judge the merits of either than in sampling both?"

"I'll bring over some of both, then," decided Mrs. Hopkins with a grin of appreciation. She bustled toward the door, paused, and turned back. "What you aim to do while you're here, Mr. Baldwin?"

"At present," replied Adolph, tilting back in his chair and beaming benignly upon her, "I find myself in a happy and perfectly aimless state of lethargy. Have you any suggestions—nothing arduous, mind you?"

"Perhaps you'd like to go fishing," Mrs. Hopkins ventured helpfully. "There's trout galore in the creek, and Mr. Saylor's rods and things is in the closet there, if you ain't got your own."

"Fishing," mused Adolph dubiously—"a pleasant pastime if it weren't for the worms. Digging worms, now—"

"But Mr. Saylor don't use worms," advanced his advisor. "He's got other kind of bait—imitation flies and things. Trout, they're real dainty eatin', Mr. Saylor says. If you was to catch any, I could cook 'em up for your supper."

Adolph rose swiftly and purposefully.

"Your arguments are irresistible," he said. "Trout for supper! Provided, of course, the creek is not too far away."

Five minutes later, having supplied her protégé with necessary directions for locating the creek, Mrs. Hopkins hurried away toward the dimly visible farmhouse. Adolph loped to the window and hung himself over the sill to watch her departure.

"Adieu, my angel of mercy!" he cried yearningly. "We shall meet again."

#### IV.

ADOLPH fished that morning, fished in a stream that cut a devious silver path through verdant ferns and moss and harbored frolicsome schools of speckled brook trout and perch. He returned to his borrowed domain at noon with a trio of glistening trout in his basket, which was not so much a tribute to Adolph's skill as a fisherman as a reflection on the credulity of the fish. Adolph was doubtless as surprised at his catch as his victims. He had never made so little physical effort with so satisfactory a result.

As he tramped lazily back to the house, visions of fried chicken and blueberry pie companioned him, and savory whiffs of these delicacies greeted his nostrils as he stepped inside.

That afternoon, stretched in the hammock that Mrs. Hopkins had unearthed for him and slung on the porch, the erstwhile poet indulged in a philosophic reverie. He had never found life so sweet nor so effortless. He had never felt so relaxed



nor so full. The habitual complaint of his neglected stomach had ceased.

But the strangest result of this unexpected satiety was that Adolph's muse had deserted him. Adolph made the discovery with bewilderment but not despair. He wondered suddenly if he had mistaken the pangs of hunger for a creative urge.

## V.

WHILE Adolph was receiving the willing and energetic attentions of little Mrs. Hopkins in his mountain exile, Madeline, twenty-five miles away in Newton Center, was laying plans for the campaign that would insure his genius a worthy audience.

She was careful to permit a week to elapse before taking her first step. It occurred to her that by waiting a week an incipient panic might arise of its own accord, and when nothing of the sort happened she betook herself to the offices of the *Gazette* and demanded an interview with the editor.

The editor's name was Bridewell, and he was a harassed little man with shrewd eyes and a gentle tolerance of all human frailties. He guessed at once that his charming little visitor was distressed about something—which was precisely what Madeline had intended. He offered her a chair beside his desk.

"What can I do for you, Miss—"

"Van Kirk," supplied Madeline tremulously. "I've come to you for advice, please. Something terrible has happened—"

"Very glad to do anything in my power," murmured the editor.

"—To a friend of mine," continued Madeline. "He has disappeared."

She expected this announcement to have the startling effects of a large rock thrown in a small puddle, but Mr. Bridewell merely raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed!"

"Disappeared," repeated Madeline clearly. "A young man—a poet."

"Well, now that's too bad," murmured the editor sympathetically but without frenzy. "But I wouldn't worry about him if I were you. Lots of people disappear, but they generally turn up."

"Oh, but this is different," persisted Madeline. "My—my friend is not the sort of person to vanish without a word of explanation. He was an unusual person—most unusual. A poet, you understand."

"Yes, poets are often unusual," agreed Mr. Bridewell gravely. "What's the young man's name?"

"Baldwin—Adolph Baldwin."

"Never heard of him."

"He's not very well known—yet," she explained.

"What makes you think he's gone?"

"I—I had an appointment with him, and when he didn't keep it I investigated and found that he had left his rooming house. After that I went to his employers—"

"Employers! I thought you said he was a poet," cut in the editor.

"He is, but—"

"Where did he work?"

"At the Goodstyle Emporium."

"In what capacity?"

"He—he sold neckties," confessed Madeline.

"Aha!" exclaimed the editor, a reminiscent glitter lighting his shrewd eyes. "Perhaps your young friend beat it in self-defense. Perhaps *he's* the obliging gentleman who sold me a fifty cent cravat a few weeks ago for two fifty. Perhaps there were other customers with the same grievance. Perhaps—"

"Oh, no, sir," interrupted the horrified Madeline, her wide gray eyes reproaching him. "Mr. Baldwin wouldn't have done a thing like that. He was most honorable."

Mr. Bridewell sheepishly conquered his satiric impulse and drew a mask of sympathy over his twinkling face.

"I'm afraid you don't understand," Madeline told him sadly. Mr. Baldwin was a poet—he had devoted his life to his art."

"Doubtless," agreed the editor, "but just what do you want me to do about it?"

This was more to the point. Madeline leaned eagerly forward.

"I thought you would be glad to advertise his disappearance in your paper—as you do when people are missing."

"Oh, but I have no authority to do this," protested Mr. Bridewell. "You're no kin of the young man's?"

Madeline dropped her eyes.

"No; but—"

Even a city editor can recognize romance when he sees it. Mr. Bridewell sighed and inwardly cursed the cause of this charming girl's distress.

"Then there's nothing I can do," he repeated regretfully. "We've had no word of his disappearance except through you, and I am inclined to believe you've become unduly alarmed. If the *Gazette* were to print a story about his disappearance, he would have the right to sue us. Besides, if I advertised every young man who failed to keep his appointments, I would have no space for news."

Madeline heard him out with her pretty lips drooping dejectedly. But she was not to be so easily disposed of. She rummaged around in her purse and produced a sheaf of typewritten pages.

"Perhaps," she suggested gently, "if you were to read one of his poems, you would feel differently. Perhaps you would print one. I should be glad to give it to you for nothing."

Mr. Bridewell sat hard on his impatience and accepted the proffered sheets. He glanced cursorily over them—went back and reread them more carefully a second time. Then he glanced a little wildly over his glasses at the expectant girl.

"They're really beautiful, aren't they?" she said softly. "So unusual—don't you think?"

The editor's eyes encountered that rapt gray gaze and dropped before it. He had been called a man of marvelous restraint, and so he proved himself now.

"Unusual?" he murmured. "Very—exceedingly unusual. But I fear I cannot use them—"

"Oh, no?" cried Madeline.

"You see, my dear young woman, the *Gazette* is not a poetry magazine. Much as they would—er—entertain my readers, I will still have to refuse them."

"And you can't advertise his disappearance?"

"Unfortunately, no," confessed the ed-

itor, and added, because he really was a kindly soul and Madeline *was* very appealing: "You just wait a week or so longer. Let me know whether he turns up."

Madeline went home, dejected, frustrated but far from beaten. She had not anticipated these obstacles. She had believed that Adolph's disappearance would be enough. Men like her Adolph were not born every day. She would wait a week, and then, surely, she would have better results. Something would happen.

And something did. It was Mr. Bridewell who phoned Madeline just a week after their unproductive interview. His voice was strangely excited.

"Did you say your young man's name was Baldwin?" he asked. "Adolph Baldwin?"

Madeline reassured him on this point.

"Do you happen to have a picture of the young man?"

"Oh, yes!" she cried eagerly.

"Suppose you bring it along and come down here," suggested the editor. "I think I have news of the gentleman."

## VI.

THE following morning Madeline hopped out of her little runabout before the gate of her uncle's summer retreat. It was nine o'clock, and she saw with satisfaction that she had made the twenty-five miles in a little over an hour. She hurried down the gravel path, stepped briskly across the porch, and paused on the threshold of the sun-flooded living room.

Before the table, which was carefully swathed in snowy linen, attractively bright with gleaming silver, sat Adolph. Before him was an oval platter partly bereft of its burden of golden brown country sausages. At his left rose a savory tower of steaming pancakes; at his right was a shining coffee pot. A plate of fried potatoes and a jar of golden honey added their substantial presence to the tempting assemblage. From the kitchen came the pleasing clatter of dishes and the sounds of brisk footsteps. A feathered orchestra outside the open windows added an exotic touch to the scene.



"Adolph!" cried Madeline.

"Madeline!"

He detached himself from the armchair, that had rendered his gustatory pastime less arduous, and loped across the room.

"Madeline! My darling!"

Madeline held him off, however, while her eyes appraised him in confusion. For Adolph the esthetic, Adolph the svelte, had indeed disappeared. So had the concave hiatus between his cravat and belt; so had the cadaverous hollows beneath his cheek bones; so had his hair. The touching pallor that had been the badge of his unremunerative profession had been banished by the sun, and his eyes were no longer hungry.

"Adolph, dear—your hair!" cried Madeline.

He raised a rueful hand to his head.

"In summer—well, it's cooler this way, darling, but—"

"You've changed!"

"Nothing could change my love for you!" he cried ardently. "And you've come to me—in answer to my prayers!"

This reminded Madeline of her mission. Soberly she took a letter from her pocket. The envelope bore the name of a law firm in its corner.

"There is news for you, dear; you must be brave."

Swiftly Adolph tore open the letter, as swiftly read it. Then he faced her dazedly.

"My uncle," he said, "has died—and left me his fortune."

"Yes, Adolph dear."

"I was his namesake. He disapproved of my art—yet he left me his fortune."

"Yes, dear, I know."

Adolph motioned tragically to the letter in his hand.

"He expresses the wish that, in gratitude, I renounce my poetry—renounce it!"

"Oh, my dear!"

"How"—he turned to her fiercely—"can I accept the money—*his* money—if I do not accede to that request?"

"But, Adolph dearest, you can refuse it!"

Adolph blinked rapidly. Refuse it, yes. Relive those hungry days when the voice of his muse had become so intermingled

with the plaint of his maltreated stomach that he had been unable to discriminate between them! His harried gaze wandered to the cheerful breakfast table and from there to the letter. Then they encountered Madeline's tender eyes.

"Do you love me, Madeline?" he asked huskily.

"Oh, Adolph dear, of course!"

"You will marry me?"

"Yes, Adolph dear!"

"Then," said Adolph with a magnificent air of renunciation, "I accept the money. No"—as she started to protest—"I cannot subject you to a life of poverty, and I must have you!"

"But *look*, Adolph!"

She unfurled a newspaper. From the printed pages his own likeness stared blandly back at him. Over the picture ran the caption: "Missing Heir to Fortune."

"You see, dear, it might be easy now. Your picture *did* get in the paper, and the editor said your poems were most unusual!"

For the moment the appeal of that coveted publicity threatened his decision. But a fortnight under the skillful ministrations of Mrs. Hopkins had sadly undermined his creative morale. He thought rapidly. Certainly if he relinquished the possibilities of fame there would be compensations. For who can say with any degree of certainty what an untried poet might have done if fortuitous circumstances had not deprived him of his pen before he had proved himself!

This apocryphal distinction, at least, he would carry down the vista of his well nourished years. This, at least, was now certain—as was the fortune and Madeline.

Thus it was that Adolph, by assuming his cloak of martyrdom, made certain of his fortune and forever preserved his future wife's illusions in that best of embalming fluids—insoluble uncertainty.

"No, my darling," he said resolutely, "I cannot subject you to the hardships suffered by Poe's unfortunate wife." He sighed as he folded her in his arms. "After all, my dear, I *may* not be a Poe!"



# Desert Voices

By **KENNETH PERKINS**

*Author of "Queen of the Night," "The Bull-Dogger," etc.*

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

SAMSON.

**N**OAH DOXEY stood underneath the speckled placard which read: "Dan Crockett, his Alabama Band. No vibrating after sunrise."

Sunrise had come; so had that earnestly wished for event, the ultimate disintegration of the morale of Sun-up citizens. The gnarled, narrow-shouldered little man who that night had been judged and had sat in the seat of judgment, rubbed his hands.

He had rubbed them only a few moments before as if washing them of Phil Wyndham's fate in the age-old manner of Pilate. But now he rubbed them in the manner of a man who is completely and vindictively satisfied.

Hallie Crockett had brought this on the town! Let them go to their destruction! Let them tear themselves to pieces! Let them commit murder and pay for what they

are doing. He, Noah Doxey, would not raise a finger to stop them.

And that was exactly what was happening to the citizens of Sun-up. They were tearing one another to pieces. Old Doxey saw the human traits of these Sun-up citizens vanishing, crumbling before his very eyes.

Hallie Crockett was in the hands of the worst man there, Fred Hayden—a just punishment for her crimes; Doxey chuckled to himself. As for the rest, the scene which was taking place before his eyes was a veritable debacle. Pleasing as it was to the bloodthirsty old vulture up there on the dais, it was too harrowing to watch.

Doxey felt a qualm in his dyspeptic stomach, he felt a weakness shivering through his knock knees. For the first time within his memory he felt a terrific yearning for a drink of spirituous liquor.

Unfortunately there was no such liquor within his reach. To be sure, a bottle

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whizzed past his head at this very moment and he ducked. It crashed on Dan Crockett's placard and doused itself on the mess of iron gray hair and sticky feathers of Doxey's head—a sweetish, sirupy fluid.

Another bottle hit him on the chest. He caught it, holding it up by the neck and swinging it above his head with the indefinite intention of protecting himself from the brawling gang. But he did not throw it, perhaps because he was afraid, or else because he did not know whom to throw it at.

Slipping down from the dais and crouching so as to run along the floor on all fours, he slunk to the nearest window, leaped over the sill into the blazing morning light and landed comfortably in the sand and tumbleweed. In his hand he still retained that bottle of purple liquid to which he clung with the dazed intention of self-defense.

He looked back, breathless, pallid, terrified, into that window. He saw one other man standing there aloof.

Tex Ringo watched the last stand of his admirer, Shank Miller, with the detached amusement of a man watching a huge dog fighting a pack of yapping curs. Tex's one desire was to draw and empty his revolver into that whirlpool of humanity. But this he could not do.

Shank Miller and Phil Wyndham were fighting, not like two men, but like twenty. They were so ubiquitous that it would have taken a miracle to fire without hitting either one of them. In fact, no one—perhaps due to the suddenness of the fist fight—had drawn a gun.

The humpback had jumped from his seat as foreman of the jury, and thrown himself bodily on Phil's arm—the arm that picked up the revolver from the sawdust of the floor. Three of the gang had hurled themselves at Phil, one tackling his legs, another his waist, and the third throwing his arms about the boy's neck.

Humpty, Tex observed, had extricated Phil's gun by the simple and time-honored Mexican method of biting his hand.

Shank Miller meanwhile transformed himself into something that looked like a windmill spinning in a tornado. He had floored Quiggley with a bone-crashing blow to the jaw.

A Mexican, with a long slash of his bowie knife, ripped Shank's leather vest halfway down the back. Whereat the latter again used his sledge hammer fist, dropping the vaquero for an indefinite sleep.

His boot caught another knifer, sending him rolling in a gasping exhalation of breath. But this was as far as his exploits could go.

Three others were upon him. He was dropped by a succession of blows timed on his long red chin. Still whirling and kicking he found himself at the bottom of a churning mill of hooflike boots.

Tex Ringo's attention had been called from the exploits of his faithful worshiper in the climax of the fight. Perhaps, if he had watched the downfall of Shank Miller he could not have restrained himself in his innate impulse to use his six-gun.

But the fact was, Tex was more interested in the psychological aspects of the conflict—or it might even be said in the spiritual outcome. He was not a man who reacted suddenly or violently to actual objective results.

A few men with broken jaws, a few with unsheathed knives trying vainly to bury their blades in Shank's tremendous back, these were not events that either shocked or excited Tex Ringo. He was concerned at that moment with a very different matter.

Was Phil Wyndham worthy of the love of Dan Crockett's daughter? Tex came at last to the definite conclusion that he was.

Phil, with one hand still bound, with his legs tackled by a chunky half-breed, his jaw set like a steel trap on a twisted, torn cigarette—that was the picture that demanded Ringo's attention.

"It is a fight with two men against two dozen," Tex said to himself. "Phil can't win by brute strength. But if he combines it with brains, he is worthy. Otherwise, Dan Crockett's daughter had better look further before choosing her man." The fight went on. "And yet," he said, "what deed can that blundering cowdog do to save himself?"

He watched, still revolving every possibility in his mind, ready at any moment to blaze away if a single member of that jury drew a gun.

"If he falls now," Tex was saying to himself, "they'll swing him up to a rafter before he could bat an eye."

Tex's trigger finger began to itch, but he waited. "It 'd be a damn nuisance," he said, "to kill a lot of men to save one."

Another blow from Wyndham's fist and a vaquero rolled over. Six of them closed in.

"I guess he'll swing if the rafters are strong enough," Tex remarked, looking up to the ceiling. Then: "By hell!" he exclaimed. "Why can't he tear the whole house down about their heads? He swore a dozen times to wreck the place! Now's his chance—his only one."

The outlaw's face lighted up, the serenity giving way to a smile, to a radiant, an extraordinary excitement.

"Damn him, he's using his whole power now if a man ever did! He's growing stronger every time they throw him to the ground! Sawdust is giving the boy strength! Come on for the big bust there, boy, if you want to save your name! There you go!"

Tex laughed at the spectacle. "He's going to put a stop to the whole business if he has the strength of a he-man. Now those uprights that hold the weight of this rotten old roof—"

In a brief moment of respite—scarcely more than a second or two, while the gang had surged back to make another onslaught, Tex caught a glimpse of Phil. The boy was straining every muscle; his head was thrown back, revealing the full young throat and the bulging red tendons of his neck; his shirt sleeves were torn away from magnificent biceps; his huge shoulders were bent forward.

"Hurrah! He's doing it. He is the man! He's passed the test I set for him! He's got the strength. He's got the bean! He's doing the one thing, by hell!"

It hadn't been long—a few weeks—since Phil Wyndham had tried to ride the bucking mare down at the Crockett farm. On that occasion the wish of the Widow Crockett had been a peculiar one: the little worldly disappointed woman, lying on her death-bed and watching her foreman making his futile attempt to ride that outlaw, had prayed for one of the few times in her life.

And her petition was a paraphrase of that heartrending prayer of Samson, shorn of his strength and plagued by the Philistines: "Remember me, I pray thee, O Lord God. Remember and strengthen me only this once."

Her prayer had not been answered then, although perhaps it had not been offered up for the insignificant, the inconsequential breaking of an outlaw mare. If the Widow Crockett had lived she might have seen her prayer answered in a manner considerably more soul satisfying than she had wished for—a manner resembling the last deed of Samson in the temple of the Philistines.

Now the house was full of men and women: and all the lords of the Philistines were there—that beheld while Samson made sport.

And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God—

And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left—

And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE PHILISTINE.

PHIL'S desire to break away from his assailants and follow Hayden and the girl to that little room was the only urge necessary for him at that moment. Had he known how much she actually needed him, there could have been no deed too great to do, no bonds too strong to hold him.

On the other side of that wall scarcely ten feet distant, in the little make-up room, Hallie Crockett found herself confronted by a man who was maddened to the point of hysteria.

Hayden's intent appeared to be to beat her with his fist; that was what she could read in his eyes. He was infuriated by what she did not exactly know. She was certain, however, that it was not through any act of hers that he was so crazed.

The man had passed through certain events that night of which the girl was not



wholly aware. She merely guessed at a part of the truth; it had something to do with the death of John Denver. Added to this Fred Hayden had openly shown his desire to see Wyndham lynched after that travesty of justice in the barroom.

He had, insofar as his own soul was concerned, committed murder. The rapid sequence of events after that tar and feather party in the Bowl Cañon had worked a peculiar havoc on the mind of Fred Hayden, and now when the girl humiliated him with her outburst of invective he turned upon her like a man bereft of all reason.

"You *will* accuse me of murder, will you—you little catamount!" he shouted. "I'll show you! Tell me now—tell me again! Accuse me again!"

She could not answer him except with a frightened scream.

"I'm not guilty, you little spitfire! No one has so much as dreamed I'm guilty—except *you*! I'll tear your tongue from your head—if you dare to so much as whisper it!"

She screamed, but her voice was pitifully small in that tumult. She fought—a weak, fragile thing against the strength of a big man. Her only hope was that Phil Wyndham could burst those rawhide bonds, fight off the score of men who were his captors and smash into the room.

As she hoped desperately for this miracle another thing happened; something unlooked for, incomprehensible, appalling. The studs, braces and planking of the wall between that room and the bar twisted symmetrically in the form of a cat's cradle, then leaned over above her.

Hallie Crockett had the definite impression of Phil Wyndham standing bound on the other side of that wall exerting some sort of superhuman strength like a Hopi shaman moving the mountains with his will. It was not only an impression; it was a belief.

Fred Hayden paled, his eyes widening as if he feared, as if he knew, he was going mad. His grip, which had twisted her wrists like a torturing rack, stiffened, but seemed to lose all conscious strength. She squirmed free. It was not like squirming from a man with taut muscles, but from a

powerful manikin that has no willful means of tightening its hold.

The man gasped in fright. His finely chiseled nostrils quivering, his lips tightened over even white teeth.

The next instant the roof, weighted down by many rotten old shakes, fell sagging in the middle. The window was cross-barred by two huge rafters falling downward.

Hayden's distracted gaze darted from the window to the roof, now suspended, then to the inclined wall and the half open door—the only remaining way of escape. The girl meant nothing to him—except, perhaps, an impediment to his escape.

He whirled her bodily from him and sprang toward the door. What he saw there was considerably more appalling than the inclined wall, the suspended roof, or the barred window of Hallie's little room.

The whole roof of the Golden Cloud had fallen inward on the dance floor. Men were scrambling to save themselves. The light of day flooded in. Everywhere—in patches there seemed an unnatural nearness of the flaming red sky.

But these details were not what had terrified Fred Hayden. They were obliterated from his mind by the one important and horrifying fact that he found himself face to face with Phil Wyndham, who now was untrammelled either by bonds or by the debris of the room.

Hayden recoiled, a strange paralysis of fear numbing his arms. He knew that in that little twisted room under the suspended ceiling, behind the warped door, imprisoned by the rafters across the window, he would have to give an account of himself before Phil Wyndham and the girl.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### A BROKEN MAN.

THE drama of the meeting in Hallie's room was not revealed to the eyes of those who were in the street. Doxy, the first to escape to the clear sparkling air of an Arizona dawn, was soon joined by Jen Parker and other women of the town. It took only a few minutes for

the whole of Sun-up to gather at the Golden Cloud.

The scene there at sunrise resembled nothing so much as a round-up: pintos pawing at the adobe, waiting for their masters; boys shouting and gleeful, restrained by anxious mothers; dogs barking vociferously—jackdogs, half-breed shepherd dogs, mongrels with coyote blood. The whole scene now became as festive as it was exciting.

"That foreman from Hallie Crockett's ranch always did say he'd tear down the Golden Cloud," an old stockman remarked, "and damned if he ain't done it!"

"Nonsense!" Jen Parker cried. "There has been a cyclone. Look at what's happened to the roof. I seen a cyclone handle a roof just thataway!"

"You're right," a ranchwoman agreed. "Ain't no man who could have done that much damage in a single night—no, nor in a month."

But there had been no cyclone, as everyone knew, and the fact remained that the roof of the old place was gone—or rather it had sunk down between the four warped old walls, apparently with the weight of the huge shakes which covered the rotten rafters.

Many a home had fallen with it, as evidenced by the flock of bats that were fluttering blindly in the sunlight. Two owls had winged their way down into the blue depths of the Bowl Cañon.

And in precisely the same manner—with a flutter and blind staring about—two Mexican rustlers, those who had been rash enough to use their knives in the scramble with Phil Wyndham and Shank Miller, crawled out from under the débris, mounted their horses, and galloped off. Sun-up never heard of them again.

Others came out one by one—scrambling through the windows, crawling under the jammed saloon door, wriggling through a large crevice which had opened in the ramshackle façade of the old den. Some were covered with the débris of bats' nests, with splintered shakes, with sawdust.

Humpty wormed himself through a window and looked about for his horse. If the onlookers had not realized the more

serious aspects of that fallen roof, of men coming out with faces battered and bleeding after the fight, of the possibilities of others in there pinned and helpless, they would have laughed outright at the appearance of the little ragged half-breed crawling out and hobbling to his horse.

Instead, they greeted him with a respectful silence. He turned his huge face full upon them so that the deep folds and dust filled wrinkles revealed his age; perhaps despite the alertness of movement he was more than eighty.

"They have tried to restore the years that the locusts have eaten!" he cackled, his voice breaking in sharply upon the silence. "This house is broken as a reed. It is like the chaff which the wind drives away—puff, puff! like that."

As a parting gesture of contempt, he blew upon the crowd, puffing his chest out like a pigeon. Then, having spat in their direction, he spurred his range fed cayuse, and galloped off into the gulch. He was another character which Sun-up never saw again.

Sam Quiggley was the next to come out. The harnessmaker who had served at the Golden Cloud as Hallie's croupier had made his last exit from the Temple of Fortuna considerably the worse for wear. His torn shirt, swollen jaw, and two blackened eyes showed that he had entered into the spirit of the Golden Cloud's last hour.

"Where is Phil Wyndham?" he cried irately. "We ain't going to let him go now. Guilty or not guilty, he ought to be hung."

This reference to the luckless prisoner of that night's trial brought the attention of Noah Doxey, Tex Ringo and the others to the fact that Phil had not yet come out of the débris. No one, of course, had seen him go into Hallie's room, for every man in the saloon had rushed in the other direction with the intention of escaping that falling roof.

Phil, meanwhile, had thrown himself into the absorbing climax of love and hate which was to take place in Hallie's little apartment. At that very moment, separated from the crowd, alone in the little den which Hallie had used as her office,



Wyndham, Hayden and the girl were settling their affairs.

Hallie Crockett witnessed a peculiar meeting between the two men who had been suitors for her hand. Hayden, she observed, had recoiled paling, staggering back into the room. She saw Wyndham follow.

The three found themselves in a tiny place, scarcely six feet square, the window crossed with big rafters, the roof slanting down to as to touch Phil's unkempt shaggy hair, the door twisted askew, leading into the débris of the main dance hall.

But the peculiar thing about that meeting was that Hayden—who, according to Hallie's analysis, had proved himself an inveterate coward—did not flinch at this meeting. Instead, when he caught Phil's eye he actually seemed to raise himself to his full height.

But it was not the act of a man standing up to face an enemy. It was more like a cornered, terrified thing becoming suddenly congealed, as for instance a squirrel that sees a dog. Phil drew back his arm to time a blow.

Both Wyndham and the girl instantly had the peculiar illusion that Fred Hayden could not have raised his arm to protect himself from that punch. He appeared to be actually paralyzed.

They were right.

Hayden's stare directed at the disheveled and blood smirched man before him was vacant, fatuous, almost imbecilic. He opened his mouth, saying in an almost unintelligible simper: "I won't fight. If you have come to kill me, kill me. I won't fight. I can't. I am done for. I am—"

His voice broke miserably, and as it broke the rigidity of his pose broke also. He staggered back, leaning against the twisted plank like a drunken man.

"Now, then!" Phil burst out, exultantly.

The girl stepped back with a frightened cry. The imminence of what she feared horrified her.

"What reason is there that I shouldn't kill you here and now?" Wyndham demanded.

Hayden did not answer this. He did not even plead for mercy. It seemed to Hallie

as if he had not heard what Phil was saying—that from then on he would be deaf. Something else was obsessing his mind.

What had happened to him? What was going on there in his mind? Had he gone through some secret tragic scene that night of which the girl and Phil Wyndham would never know? What was he fighting against?

A thought came to Hallie, as a sudden revelation will come in a crisis of extreme emotion. Fred Hayden had changed that night from a suave, self-satisfied "pillar of society" to a man hiding a crime.

Perhaps it would never be known what that crime was. Perhaps only one other man ever did know and he could not divulge the secret. For that man's body—John Denver—was lying on the floor of the next room.

These thoughts flashed through the mind of Hallie Crockett in merely a fraction of that climactic moment. There was scarcely any pause to Phil's furious words.

"What reason is there that I should not kill you for bearing false witness against me? For stirring up those men to lynch me? You had them judge me to-night. Now is my chance. I am judging you. What can you say to save yourself? Not a damn word! No man can defend himself after what you have tried to do—to me and to this girl."

Hayden answered this time, still staring vacantly at Phil—as if looking through him to the room beyond.

"No, I can't defend myself against you. Only let me go. Don't take my life, I beg you. I have done nothing."

There was a surprising, an uncanny lack of passion to his voice. He spoke tonelessly, he whispered, he gibbered, in fact, only a part of what he said could be heard.

"I will go away. I will promise never to come again. I will never see her or speak to her. I will never remember her if you will let me go. Give me my life!"

Phil stepped to him perplexed, baffled at the absolute lack of emotion the man was showing.

"Look here, you poor scared mongrel," he said, "are you putting this on? Are you going to play another trick on me as you did up at the Doxey House? You would

not fight then, would you? Why? *Because you knew John Denver was backing you! Is that it?"*

"No! So help me, God!"

Phil stood over him. The other leaned back, wilting, still supporting himself against the wall. He offered no resistance when Wyndham took his gun from him.

"This is what I ought to do to you—damnable liar that you are: Plug you right now and bury you under the débris in that room."

Hayden laughed.

The other stepped back, raised his gun.

Hallie screamed, throwing herself into Phil's arms.

It was a magical effect that came over him when in the climax of his power, his strength, his victory, he felt this desperate, clinging, round-limbed girl in his arms.

Her very softness seemed to press against his heart, soothing and mollifying what there was of brutality, cruelty, murderous passion. Instead of being racked with torture he found himself calm, still powerful, completely victorious.

"Can't you see there's no use?" she asked, imploringly. "He's beaten, that's clear. He's not thinking of himself. I can see it all now. Perhaps he bargained with John Denver to kill you—we'll never know."

"A lie. So help me, God!" Hayden interjected.

The girl went on without heeding him: "But if it's true that he made that bargain then he's a murderer—"

"A damnable lie! Before God, I tell you I'm innocent!"

Phil answered calmly as if Hayden were not in the room: "Yes, you're right, he's beaten at his own game. But—"

The girl clung to him, interrupting the threatened move.

"Then what more have you to do with him?" she pleaded. "Why soil your hands?"

Both believed what was the actual but unverified truth. Fred Hayden had outlawed himself. There was no more doubt about that even though there was no proof. Phil passed judgment upon him—a judgment of infinite scorn and pity.

"If we never see you again—"

A second time Hayden laughed. There was no prayer of thanks; merely a slight laugh in which, however, it was easy for both Hallie and Phil to detect a half-hearted satisfaction.

He started to the door—still in the peculiar manner of a drunken man thinking intently on something far removed. It was necessary to bow down in order to pass that broken door frame. He fell to his knees and crawled through the mass of débris which blocked his path to the front door of the Golden Cloud.

Despite his clothes which, during the events of that night had received no ruffling, he presented the appearance, as he crawled, of a man who had been torn to shreds in some terrific storm.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### BACK TO OLD AGE.

HALLIE looked about at the complete demolition of her little room, the tilted make-up table, at the inclined wall with its tattered pictures, carved initials, bullet holes; at the speckled mirror broken across the face with cracks that resembled the pattern of a spider's web. And finally at the records scattered about the floor.

It was hard to believe that those black disks were innate with songs from all the world. They lay there as lifeless and still as the barkeep had lain on the dance floor during the trial.

And yet they possessed life—articulate and harmonious life; a harmony that was immortal; a harmony with which this girl had charmed the dull-witted citizens of Sun-up, as her father had charmed the miners of a generation before. It was with these black, inanimate disks that Fred Hayden had attempted to charm the girl—and failed.

That room was like a phonograph record, imbued with the passions of fifty years. But now with the destruction of its walls the memories could be preserved no longer.

They were gone—gone and forgotten were the murders chronicled by those bullet



marks, gone were the violent love affairs preserved in the dark carvings of those initials, gone were the painted faces that had looked into that speckled mirror. Indeed, the events of that last night would seem as remote as the events of the old mining era because of the falling of the Golden Cloud.

The faro and monte which had enticed the renegades, the dancing and quadrilles, the bar, the mock trial were dreams of the past. Noah Doxey was again to be the leading citizen of Sun-up for his majesty had been shorn from him for that one night only.

Shank Miller would return to his cows, Tex Ringo to his mountains, Sam Quiggley to his harness shop. And the others who had come into that hall and acted their parts—the gamblers, stockmen, the hump-back, the well dressed Fred Hayden—on that one stage at least they would never act their rôles again.

They would vanish as completely as Dan Crockett and his Alabama Band had vanished. As Humpy had said: "No man would know where that house stood." Fortuna had gathered her tattered cards, packed them in a deck and departed.

As for Phil Wyndham and Hallie Crockett:

"We are going home," Phil said, wiping his smirched face with a ragged strip of his bandanna. "Don't say no. I'm not listening to you any more. We are going. I am going to take you there where we belong.

"I know now what I can do. I can tear down a house and I can set one up. That's what I'm going to do now. I'm not proposing. You aren't in any condition to be proposed to and I'm not in any condition to speak of weddings."

He failed in an attempt to cover his bare, red streaked arms. "But look here! One thing is settled. You remember I said I was going to take you down into your ma's corral and make you watch me while I rode that outlaw bronc? That's where we are headed for right now. You aren't going to refuse me; get that straight first!"

"I'm not refusing," Hallie said.

Avoiding him as he attempted again to take her in his arms and pick her up, she

knelt down and rummaged among the scattered disks under the make-up table. Throwing aside the fine records of Melba, Farrar, Caruso, Schumann-Heink, and the rest, she finally chose one of those diminutive little ones which are sold for a dime or given out as advertisements by music concerns. This she slipped into her dress over her heaving bosom.

She turned to Phil. "You said you would not take no for an answer. Come on, we'll go home."

But there was a barrier for them to pass before Phil and Hallie could return to the Crockett ranch.

Outside, Sam Quiggley and his gang were eagerly waiting for their victim to show himself, and while they were waiting for him, Tex Ringo was waiting for Dan Crockett's daughter. To Tex at least, Hallie was the most important person in that town.

Tex remembered that he had last seen Hallie as she was entering her room. Leading the crowd around the old shack to the window of the little den, he called to her. She answered, and the men immediately fell to tearing away the rafters and planking which had blocked the window.

"Come on out there, Phil Wyndham," Quiggley cried. "We ain't through with you as yet."

Phil jumped from the little window to the ground—then reached up and helped the girl down after him. They found themselves immediately within a ring of townsfolk—of women, boys and men. Among the men there still remained a few who, like Sam Quiggley, believed that they had a mission to perform. But for some reason or other they kept their distance—perhaps because they lacked a leader, or because some of the more blood-thirsty of the number had disappeared, or perhaps on the other hand because they noticed a change in Phil. His appearance now as he stood unkempt, free, conscious of having pulled the old house down about their ears, was most formidable to behold.

Tex Ringo, who probably was the man there best schooled in the subject of mob fear, knew that Phil was safe. And, similarly, Ringo knew that his own rôle in

that drama of Hallie Crockett's life was over.

"Before I go, men," he said as he mounted his horse—the swiftest desert horse in that county—"let me make one point clear. When you call the sheriff from Yuma, you tell him how John Denver really died. You won't have my testimony, because I won't be here. But you can remember what I'm saying.

"I killed John Denver, and I'll tell you why. I saw him crawl to the window of the vestibule in the Doxey House, and I saw him raise his gun to bump this boy, Phil Wyndham, off.

"If that was not good cause for me to shoot, well and good! I'm a murderer! But that is not going to buy you anything. I'm riding off now. If any man objects, let him speak up!"

Sam Quiggle made a gesture of disapproval, but it dissolved in a shrug of his bony shoulders. On his face, as he turned from Tex to look at Phil Wyndham, there was an expression of heartrending disappointment.

Hallie broke through the crowd and ran up to the side of Ringo's mount.

"I'm glad for what you did to-night," she said as she held out her hand. "I am glad I opened the Golden Cloud if it only meant that you would be drawn back again."

"Now that it's gone, I must go too," old Tex said. "You've called us out of the past. We who are outlaws heard the voice of Dan Crockett; we heard his Alabama Band again. We came; we saw the old place once more!

"And when I saw Dan Crockett's daughter fall in love—with the right man—it was a like a drink in the desert. It was like finding a luscious drink in the maguey plant just before it blossoms. You cut it—first—you cut it right to the heart! Then it fills with the juice that saves your life! I've had a drink!

"I was young again for to-night. I am going back again now across the horizon to old age."

That was Tex Ringo's good-by as, having pressed the girl's hand and released it, he gathered his mount and cantered off into

the cañon. There was never an invitation sent out again to the silver haired old desperado to return from that vanished era of bandit days.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### SOFT STUFF.

UPON the departure of the old outlaw, Hallie Crockett and her foreman slipped away from the crowd, mounted their horses, and galloped off in the direction of the county road that led to the Crockett ranch. The townsfolk accordingly turned their attention again upon the ruins of the Golden Cloud.

Thus far, it appeared that all the guests who had been present in the last hour of the old den were now accounted for. All, that is to say, save one—and he was of no great importance.

This one man, immured within the twisted walls of the old gambling hall, was Shank Miller. Those men who had bested him and trampled him underfoot had fled from the Golden Cloud upon the first intimation of disaster. Shank Miller remained, dazed, bewildered, lying under the complete protection of the mahogany bar.

He stood up, his head swimming, his general attitude—as the result of a knock-out—being one of affable resignation. Lifting himself to a sitting posture, he looked about with an astigmatic focus upon the havoc before him—a havoc which he could only vaguely see through shreds of yellow hair which hung across his eyes.

With a very characteristic analysis of the situation, he burst into a loud, good humored, exultant laugh.

"Damn if they ain't all run away from me again," he shouted—"every man jack of them! I knew I could lick them. Twelve honest men and true, b' God! Where are you hiding? Damned if they ain't run like a bunch of jack rabbits packing themselves in the mesquite. Come on! I ain't through with you-all yet!"

He stood up, bumping his head with a smashing wallop against a fallen rafter. It partly sobered him. He sat down again and fell to thinking.



"What was I doing before I finished up that gang? I have it, b' God!" he cried with a dramatic exultation. "I was playing the phonograph!"

He fumbled around on the floor eagerly, desperately. The sunlight was streaming in from a dozen crevices, flooding the dust filled spaces with flashing bands. He found the phonograph close to his foot, and set to winding it with a flushed, drunken insistence.

"Damned if I ain't been tryin to get a song out of this box all night!" he cried hotly. "And every time I get the crazy thing harnessed up somebody stops me."

He set to work in passionate earnest, as if his life depended on it. He was like a ship's wireless operator trying to get his sending set to function before the sinking of the vessel.

"First comes Tex Ringo talking this here philosophy to me," he complained angrily. "Then when I get a good tune hitched on he sends me up to investigate a murder at the Doxey House! Wow! Blooey! Damn!" This last oath came with a stab from the needle.

"Then the old box starts rattling fine, when I have to get up and make a speech—a speech for the defense! Good God! Shank Miller speechifyin'. Haw, haw, haw!"

He stopped laughing suddenly as a surge of anger came over him.

"It ain't right! When I want music, I will have music, b' God, and they ain't nobody will stop me. They *tried* to stop me. I had to fight off twenty men, twenty howling maniacs! I did it, too!

"Now if I'm interrupted again I'll mash their bones into a thousand pieces!" He gave the disk a whirl. "There y' go! Let 'er buck, b' God!"

No sooner had that little needle started its nerve racking squeak with its rhythmic rise and fall, of mechanical voices than Shank Miller heard a hoarse, terrified shout blasting into his very ear.

He turned around and saw crawling out of the debris, from the direction of Hallie's room, a pale, wild eyed man.

"Who are you, I'd like to know?" Shank asked belligerently. "You don't like my

music, eh?" He clutched the man by his two shoulders. "You think you're going to interrupt me, too, eh?"

"Stop that noise, for God's sake!" the man simpered miserably. "It 'll make me mad. Damn you! Don't hold me here to listen to it. He said I'd hear it all my life; but I won't! I won't go crazy! I'll kill myself first!"

"What the Sam Hill!" Shank exclaimed, lifting the man up and looking intently into his face. "Ah, it's you! The gent with a suit on—Mr. Fred Hayden himself! Well, why shouldn't you hear it, I'd like to know? It's good music.

"Here, stick your head into that horn. There you are. Ain't that wonderful—ain't that superb? Ain't that operatic? By cripes, that's the only word to describe that thar music. It's operatic!"

He stuffed Fred Hayden's head into the big horn until the victim drowned the music out with a desperate howl of oaths.

"Let me go, for God's sake! I'll go mad with the sound of it. Denver was right. He said I could never get the sound of it out of my ears. Let me go, or I will kill you!"

Laughing uproariously at the desperate plight of the man struggling in his arms, Shank swayed and shuffled about with the rhythm of the music.

"I danced with Tex Ringo to-night. I guess you ain't too good to dance with me, if he ain't. Come on; get in step! Stay offen my toes. I never allow for any man steppin' on my toes!"

It was a peculiarly uncanny effect that phonograph had upon the crowd outside. It floated up from the heap of ruins for all the world like a last pathetic cry from the throat of the old bar—a last cry for life.

It was the old den's swan song, ringing clear, thin, sweet, in the crisp morning air. It came—a ghostly voice rising from a house that the crowd had thought deserted—and yet, ghostly as it was, there was an uncanny sprightliness of rhythm about it, bringing the hallucination of gamblers, thieves, dance girls still pounding away at the Texas Tommy, the Sombrero Blanco, the lively Pollita!

"The place is ha'nted!" Jen Parker cried in horror.

"It's ha'nted by Shank Miller," Doxey scoffed in disgust. "That ole drunk ain't give up tinkerin' with the crazy phonograff yet!"

"Sure it's Shank Miller," Quiggley snorted disdainfully. "He ain't come out yet. Nor has Fred Hayden either."

Sam had no sooner made this remark than the crowd saw Hayden leap through the front door of the saloon, scooting like a sage rabbit fleeing from a jackdog.

Fred Hayden, for the first time within the memory of any Sun-up inhabitant, made his appearance with his red hair badly disheveled. Indeed, his tight fitting suit was ripped down the back, displaying a large flashing area of silk striped shirt.

But it was when he turned his white face on the crowd that they received the real shock. His eyes were wild, as wild and red as a Papago's who has been guzzling mescal before a religious ceremony.

"Make him stop it!" he cried voicelessly, frantically. "I'm going crazy with the sound of it. It's Denver singing out to me! God!"

He stopped looking about, collecting his wits. "What's the matter? Do you think I'm drunk? Do you think I'm crazy? Can you jackasses stand there and listen to that dead man singing to you?"

"It's only the phonograff," Quiggley said in a voice he customarily used in soothing drunken vaqueros. "Don't carry on. Take a lemon soda and your head will clear up."

He stepped to Hayden to pat him on the back, but the latter, muttering an incoherent string of oaths, turned on his heel and fled down the street.

The crowd watched him as he vaulted into his little car. Without waiting to find a hat or the necessary brown duster in which he always appeared in Sun-up, he started the rattling little machine whirling out of a sand rut, and banged away toward the county road. The brown smother of alkali received him. No citizen of Sun-up ever ordered a silo through Fred Hayden from that day on.

Coming from underneath the front door

of the saloon in the same manner as his predecessor—on all fours—Shank Miller burst upon the crowd. In his hand he held a bottle of purple sirupy stuff.

"What's the matter with that kook?" he said, nodding his head in the direction of the disappearing salesman. "Must have a powerful jag on! It ain't right to drink thataway!"

A laugh was his only answer. And those men who had taken part in the fight against this tartar slunk off into the background of the crowd without any further delay.

"The sun's up already," Shank said, rubbing his dry lips with the back of his hand. "And it sure does make you powerful thirsty!"

At this he popped open the little bottle he held in his hand and took a swig. His eye caught sight of the unlucky Noah Doxey, who was apparently frozen to the spot with apprehension at the giant's appearance.

"Ah!" Shank cried triumphantly. "At last we are face to face."

Doxey wilted, trembling at the knees.

"I ain't done nothin', Shank," he said, bringing a laugh from the crowd of women as well as from the men. "I got out when you was fighting the crowd."

"Where is the crowd? What's happened?" Shank asked, scowling horribly.

"They've all fled!" said Doxey. "You scared hell out of them!"

"So I *did* win the fight, did I?"

"Sure you did!" Doxey agreed diplomatically. "And the one you beat worst was Hayden when you started that phonograff. He was outen his head, if I know anything. Thought John Denver was calling to him."

"Drink! That's what did it!" Shank cried, dramatically holding up the purple bottle of soda water. "Let me warn you—all, every man jack of you, and you ladies likewise: swear off on this here purple and green stuff. It 'll burn the guts out of you. It won't give you a kick like cuevo or jack-ass, no. But it 'll slowly and surely corrode your bellies worse than any liquor this side of the Rio Grande. Hayden never drank nothing stronger than this, did he?"



A chorus of "No!" was shouted in assent.

He raised his voice in a flourish. "This here soft stuff and a phonograph is what give Fred Hayden the d. t's."

More shouts of acclamation, and Doxy's voice rose above the others:

"Shank, I've told the town what I was going to tell them right here, now that they're all assembled. I'm swearing off on this clear, bright morning. So help me! Never again will I drink another drop of that there purple liquor."

"When it comes to the d. t's., it's as bad as jackass," Shank cried delightedly. "Am I right?"

"You are!"

Shank took another mouthful, apparently to slake his terrific thirst. But as an object lesson to the assembled townsfolk, he blew it out into the crystalline morning air—as a Chinese laundryman blows at his ironing. The spray from his mouth funneled outward into a fine mist—so fine as to evoke a rainbow.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### A PRIVATE RODEO.

THE Crockett farm appeared particularly peaceful as it lay in that fragrant wilderness of palms, cactus and sage. As Phil and Hallie drove into the corral before the house, two brown lambs came out to meet them, then gamboled back to the mother ewes when the pounding horses' hoofs grew too terrifying. The scene, generally drowsy, was vitalized by many kinds of awakening life. Cows mooed, the outlaw mare whinnied a welcome to the saddle ponies, a sow rolled its huge weight away from the half dozen pigs and waddled to the upper end of its hog-tight corral to see what had happened. But it was the sweet smell of a large field of alfalfa that gave Hallie the greatest welcome.

The girl hurried into the main ranch-house to prepare breakfast. Phil doused his head under the water pump to wash away the coating of alkali which the journey had given him. This accomplished, he

dressed himself for a bucking contest and rapped on the door of the bunkhouse where in the old days the cowboys slept.

A sleepy mozo responded to his summons, stared at the extraordinary figure before him, but refused to show the slightest evidence of surprise. His master had spent a brawling night, that was certainly clear. But what of it? The mozo had himself achieved great glory the previous evening with the magic of mescal.

"Saddle up old Cactus Anne," Phil ordered. "I'm going to ride her."

"You will lock your spurs, *señor*?" the mozo asked, according to his regular custom.

"I will like hell!" the *señor* rejoined, as usual.

The mozo sighed, shrugged his shoulders and hobbled into the barn for some straw, which he spread in the same corner of the corral where Phil had always landed.

Meanwhile, Wyndham rolled a small, brown cigarette, which he tucked into the corner of his mouth with much the same precision as a bronc-peeler tucking his toes into the stirrups.

It seemed that the old she-devil, Cactus Anne, knew that the mustanger was going to give her a different sort of ride. Perhaps she saw a peculiar light in his blackened eyes, a dangerous grimace to that bruised face, the promise of a little hell in those tiny rapid puffs of smoke. At any rate, she stood there in the middle of the corral, tense, trembling in every muscle, her nostrils quivering, her eyes darting with fear.

"Shall I put the gunnysack on her now, *señor*," the mozo asked wearily, "or will you wait until you've finished the smoke?"

"I am going to ride her smoking, slick heeled, and rake off every hair of her old carcass."

"*Bueno*," the mozo replied indifferently. "Then I will get some more straw!" He shuffled off, muttering: "No man should ride this demon, smoking. Her hind quarters they will snap up and you will swallow the *cigarillo* in your mouth."

He approached the buckner with a handful of bran, grabbed hold of her ear with a mechanical, unemotional thrust, and

tucked the gunnysack blindfold over her eyes. "*Bueno, señor, and—adios!*"

The smoke was coming from the kitchen chimney. From the window that faced on the corral a feminine face looked out. This time it was not the old ranch woman looking from her deathbed at this scene of dynamic life. It was a young girl bubbling with optimism, youth, high spirits.

She watched the fight between Cactus Anne and the foreman with the excitement of a maid who is receiving an extraordinary, a thrilling, proposal of marriage. For that was exactly what was happening. In fact, Phil Wyndham himself had intimated that not until he had busted that mare could he consider himself worthy of the heiress of the Crockett ranch.

A dense cloud of alkali dust, a pounding of hoofs—enough to make the ground quake—and a silhouette of twisting, lurching, sun-fishing horseflesh, a man bouncing on top, fanning her with his sombrero, his head rocking back and forth as if about to snap from his neck—that was what Hallie Crockett saw.

She could not have guessed how long she watched that battle. It was a contest between a vicious old beast trying her ugliest repertoire of tricks—a sidewise lurch, a dive, a downright shock of alternate feet, a side throw to swing the rider from his balance, then a "throwback" to unseat him—all this pitted against the stubborn dogged courage of the man in the saddle.

If his will was strong enough to withstand those shocks, that terrific wrenching of his neck, the taste of blood in his mouth, he would win.

Hallie watched; the whole farmyard watched. Even the mozo appeared for the first time in his life slightly interested in the performance.

The saddle ponies scampered to the side of the corral to find out what the rumpus was about. The ewes and their lambs, the sow and her faithful retinue, stood flabbergasted. The whole barnyard, in fact, stood at attention, facing the same direction, wondering what was to come out of all this hullabaloo—this earthquake and sand-storm.

A rooster with two hens set up a wild

squawking and flapping of wings and a futile attempt at complete flight every time the bucking hell-diver came in their direction. It seemed to them that Cactus Anne persisted in following the hapless fowls from one end of the corral to the other.

A dog barked.

The mozo took off his sombrero, apparently with the intention of waving it joyfully in the air. But he never completed the act.

Hallie was crying out in acclamation. Lucy Montana, the hired woman, waddled out of the kitchen door, clapped her hands and screamed with joy. The whole farm seemed about to raise its voice in one joyful song of victory, when suddenly, miraculously, the air cleared. There was silence.

The citizenry held its breath. The whole little world there in that corral was silenced before that hovering presence—Tragedy.

The mare had actually stopped bucking and was standing, or rather crouching, the very incarnation of trembling virulence and hate. She had stopped bucking, yes, but the mozo shook his head ominously, replaced his sombrero, and shuffled off for some more straw.

He had been fooled once before, he recalled, by thinking Cactus Anne had given in when the real fact of the matter was she had stopped her frantic performance preparatory to playing her most heathenish trick.

Wyndham was still there, his knees clamped into her ribs, his rowels raking the hair from her flanks. Blood came from his nose and trickled through the compressed lips; his face was black with dust; the cigarette was still clenched viciously in the corner of his red mouth.

The mozo spread out his pitchfork of straw in the usual place. He was determined not to be inveigled this time into showing any premature exultation.

Then the old she-devil did her stunt. She dove skyward with a threatening growl, landed on her forefeet and stumbled, or pretended to stumble, and rolled over on her flank.

Phil had the momentary illusion that he was Bellerophon riding Pegasus in the



clouds, from which height he had returned suddenly to mother earth. He no longer attempted to keep his left foot in the stirrup—if he had, his leg would have been crushed. Thus, when the old mare scrambled to her feet again and made a sky dive, her rider was half out of the saddle.

One last buck, Cactus Anne was convinced, and those burning stirrups would rake her hide no longer. Instead, they would be raking the straw in the humiliating corner of the corral.

But somehow old lady Anne, the sister of Pegasus, made a mistake. It was a small mistake—merely a matter of lurching to the right instead of the left.

Phil showed a good strip of daylight between himself and the horse. He was in fact completely out of the saddle, sailing in the air—with the exception of that one foot in the stirrup. The mare bucked, yanking him down.

And he landed in the saddle again with a jolt to remember the rest of his life. In fact, he felt as if some one had hammered him into that seat so effectually that nothing less than a blacksmith could ever get him out of it again. And as he landed his cigarette flew out of his mouth, describing a long, graceful arc, and landing directly in the corner of the corral where Cactus Anne, the mozo and others present expected to see the rider land.

The old outlaw grunted in disgust, turned around and chased the rooster and his two wives in a series of straightaway bucks. But compared to her former deviltries these bucks were like the easy loping of a rocking horse. It was quite obvious that the old lady was winded—and excessively discouraged.

Having returned to the corner where Phil usually landed, she came to a stop, and with a whimsical change of mind fell to munching the hay. Thus, Cactus Anne, once a glorious outlaw, resigned herself to the peace and the humility of a—barn-horse.

Phil dismounted.

"Loosen the cinch and give the old dame some air," he said to the mozo.

The latter obeyed without so much as

winking his eye or shrugging his shoulders.

Hastening to the ranch-house, Phil was met by Hallie, who embraced him.

"Come on now and have breakfast, Phil!" she said. "Eggs and ham and tortillas! We'll celebrate the greatest victory since Sun-up struck gold."

"Well, we've got another nag for our remuda," he rejoined, with a fine pretense of indifference. "She'll make a good cow-horse before I'm through with her. And I reckon she can think steer as well as the best of them!"

"I saw it all!" the girl said, her eyes glowing. "And it was the greatest bucking contest ever pulled off in this country, I'll tell you! A pity that all Sun-up wasn't here to see the show."

"That wouldn't have done at all," Phil objected. "It was something just between you and me; in a manner of speaking, it was a proposal of marriage."

"My answer was ready before you took off your sombrero to fan the old devil," Hallie replied. "It's on the phonograph now."

Phil listened. The ordinary morning utterances of a farm yard—the mooing of the cows, the bleating of sheep, the cackling of hens, the occasional neighing of a horse—were softened by a flood of melodious and rhythmic music. On the phonograph which Hallie had given her mother there was spinning that little record she had saved out of the ruins of the Golden Cloud.

*And it was Mendelssohn's Wedding March.*

The notes whirled out above the many voices of that ranch. It was an overtone to the Hereford cows bawling for their young separated from them in the calf-sheds. It mingled with a dozen cries—the wind from the yellow Harcuvar mesas, the sighing of the pepper trees, the bleating of the little brown lambs.

And, curiously, it harmonized with the whine and squeak of that windmill circling above the watering trough where the lugubrious and lathered Cactus Anne drowned her disappointment in drink.



# The Man Who Would Not Kneel

By LESLIE GORDON BARNARD

TWO o'clock in the market square of Trois Fourchettes. Two o'clock, and an after-dinner somnolence about the place. Horses, drooping their heads in contented laziness, or sniffing the ground in search of vagrant oats dropped from noon nose-bags; their masters, contentedly also, reclining under awnings projecting from the line of stores, in which they hoped their good mesdames were not allowing the lure of new finery and such things to overcome their thriftiness. Outside the small plated window that bore the name, "Flaubert Deschesnes—Drugs, Confectionery and Novelties," old Joseph Bedard took slow and cautious revenge on M. Saucier for a defeat at draughts on the last market day. Within the store, Mme. Bedard oscillated between kitchen duties, following the noon meal served in the residence above the store, and the sale of perfumes and novelties and limited confections

to the farmers' wives and their numerous progeny.

"Draughts!" snorted *madame*. "Always draughts for that old fool of mine, and concoctions of the devil for M'sieu' Deschesnes himself!" She indulged in a very red-faced nod and frown in the direction of the small curtained-off laboratory at the back of the little store. "But for me we would be with the bailiff in a week!" She fanned herself prodigiously in a moment of respite. "Hot? *Mon Dieu*, I should say! Old Grandpère Vadboncœur passed out in the heat two days ago. It is hard on the old and the sick. They say now that poor Raymond La Marche is very low. Just a while ago I saw the La Marche rig drive by and go for the curé. I should not be surprised, poor young fellow, if he—But hark!"

Unmistakably the sound of a bell—a bell of familiar tone. *Madame* shook her



big head sadly, crossed herself, dropped a scoopful of toffee into the licorice jar, and hurried out with the others.

On the far side of the market square an unpretentious white building stood, its almost glaring starkness relieved by a few dusty trees. Above it a semblance of a spire pointed heavenward, surmounted by a cross that seemed both to invite towards and to stand between heaven and the world of sinful men below. From the steps of the church came Monsieur le Curé, to enter the rig of La Marche. As he came from the steps, and as he drove slowly down the street, the ringing of the hand bell continued, and men and women, hearing it, dropped on their knees as it passed—to pray, perchance, for the soul to be shriven, the soul that might shortly take flight from its earthy tenement. The rig came slowly past the store of Flaubert Deschesnes, outside of which clustered Mme. Bedard and her patrons, and, behind them, the tall, gaunt, piercing-eyed figure of Flaubert himself.

*Madame*, not without difficulty, eased her prodigious figure on to her knees; the customers—women and children mostly—followed devoutly; Joseph, at a significant look from his wife, hastened the movement of a draught and knelt in prayer that it might not prove a false one. Of them all but one man stood—Flaubert Deschesnes. His tall figure, slightly stooped from much work over test tubes and much study over books, remained rigid. His arms were folded, the suggestion of a half-concealed sneer was on his lips.

Monsieur le Curé, as if conscious of his regard, glanced straight at him as he passed. The boy who drove the La Marche rig stared also.

Flaubert Deschesnes let the sneer come from its semi-concealment.

*Madame*, venturing to twist her neck that she might observe her master, crossed herself again.

"I will leave!" she muttered to herself. "Joseph and I will leave. It is like serving the devil himself. No good will come of it!"

The ringing of the bell sounded more faintly; the rig of La Marche disappeared

in a rising cloud of dust, heading on its six-mile drive by the right-hand fork of the road. The square buzzed for a time with subdued conversation that soon became noisy and animated as the affairs of a passing soul were subordinated to the needs of continuing bodies. M. Saucier dusted his knees and resumed his play with Joseph Bedard. *Madame* went within to finish her immediate duties at the counter, where presently relief came to her in the person of Joseph, triumphant in victory.

## II.

As a rule it was most distasteful to Flaubert Deschesnes to be interrupted in the course of one of his experiments, which occupied so much of his time, and which, moreover, "smelled up the whole place like a gas factory," declared *madame* indignantly, her knowledge of the production of gas being limited by country birth and breeding. Now, at the sound of an insistent repetition of the two long and two short rings that told of some one desiring speech on the telephone, he put his head beyond the curtained doorway and shouted angrily:

"Joseph! Joseph!"

No sound but the continued ringing of the bell in the now vacated store. Probably, decided Flaubert in amused impatience, the old man was dreaming of draughts, or else seeking a moment free from the eye of *madame* to immerse himself in some of the strange Rabelaisian tales to which he, Flaubert, in a moment of mockery, had introduced the simple old fellow. Deschesnes wiped his hands hastily, and himself answered the call.

"Flaubert, this is Adèle La Marche!"

She need not have told him; his pulses raced at the sound of her voice, unforgettable in its timbre. Just as they had raced when, only too infrequently of late, he had caught sight of her driving past—sometimes with Raymond, and more often alone, proceeding from store to store in a round of shopping, and by her very presence gracing the old market place.

"You have heard"—he forced himself to listen to her words—"that Raymond is

worse—much worse? The curé has come and gone. He asked me why I did not send for you. The doctor is away, Flaubert, on a hurry call to a relative at St. Gauthier. He cannot be back before forty-eight hours at least. M'sieu' le Curé says, Flaubert, that the case is very like that of Jean Saucier, who claims you saved his life."

"Well?" Thus Flaubert, noncommittally, for all that his pulses raced, and a queer sense of triumph mingled with a cold sense of fear.

"You will help me, Flaubert?"

He delayed his answer until a repetition of her question forced him to temporize with: "I am not a doctor!"

"You are as good as one. Every one says so. Oh, Flaubert, you will not fail me, I know! You will come!"

"I will come!" agreed Flaubert Deschesnes slowly. He hung up the receiver almost rudely upon her thanks. He remained for some moments leaning upon the counter where the telephone instrument stood. Opposite him, for the convenience of *madame*, was a small mirror. It faithfully portrayed a man of early middle life, clean shaven, with the look of a student who is wise overmuch, of a man who has burned himself with the flame of research, of a man in whom, too, the flame of passion might easily rise. Faithfully it threw back at him the thing that was growing in his eyes, the devil which the simple *madame* seemed to know of and fear. And then the image of himself dimmed, and it seemed to Flaubert that, by some replacement of features, there came no longer his own face, but that of Raymond La Marche—Raymond La Marche, in health, stern-faced and threatening as he blasted a rival's hopes; Raymond La Marche, glowing with happiness, as on the recent day when Adèle de Carigny became his bride; Raymond La Marche, in sickness, and in his eyes an appeal for life—for life—that he might be spared to taste the fruits of wedded happiness to the full. The eyes of this image began to fade, the cheeks to lose their remaining color, the skin to shrink—a ghastly thing of death to take its place—death and dissolution. Flaubert cried out in quick terror.

"Ha! Hum! Hullo!" Old Joseph Bedard struggled to his feet from behind some convenient boxes, rubbing his eyes. He stared, affrighted, at Deschesnes. "I thought I heard some one cry out."

"If you would not eat so heartily at noon, nor waste the afternoon in sleep, maybe your addled brains would not bring dreams of nightmare," said Flaubert sharply, and disappeared into the laboratory.

"Nevertheless, my friend," declared Joseph in self-communion, "you look yourself as pale as a man who has seen a ghost!"

### III.

JOSEPH hitched the rig for him, and brought the mare to the door. *Madame* looked upon his going from the upper windows, and, perhaps because women are more touched with mysterious senses, crossed herself again. For now the man's face was placid, with the hard placidity of a lake frozen beyond the stirring of tempest. Yet underneath the lake there may be dark depths, beyond the fathoming.

As he took the forked road to the right, for the six-mile drive, nature unfolded herself in sweetness: of scent, for the woods were resinous; of vision, for the way unwound itself in beauty. Flaubert responded to none of this. For the earlier part of the journey his mind ran back in retrospect; for the latter, until the tidy farmhouse of Raymond La Marche topped a certain rise, it leaped forward in a mad race of passion that yielded not to the curbing reins of conscious effort. Back—to the beginning that was an end: the beginning of his life up here when a hideous end to ambition had been made in aiding a cheap, dishonorable physician—black sheep of a noble flock—to carry out a temporarily profitable trade in narcotics. Back—to more recent times, when the tides of retrospect surged about the lissom figure of Adèle de Carigny—she who had now become the wife of Raymond La Marche. Back—irresistibly back to the time when Raymond had discovered this outlawed chemist in the act of teaching a brother of Adèle de Carigny the use of drugs for the



purpose of stimulation, and of binding the lad to him by the chain of habit. Raymond had stepped in, administered a private tongue lashing to the offender, and a warning to keep away from the house of Carigny. The fact that Raymond had told no tales, even to Adèle, counted not with Flaubert now, for, as his mind reviewed these things, the depths beneath the frozen lake were dark.

His thoughts, then, leaped forward to meet the thing that lay ahead. He turned his mare in at the gate. The hired boy, holding the gate open for him, stared in admiring awe at the man who would not kneel.

Adèle herself opened the door for him; her brave smile of greeting meant less to him than the hand she gave him—such a small, fragile, warm thing, reposing for a generous moment trustfully in his own—his own right hand, scarred slightly with the acid of experiment.

"It was good of you to come," she said in a low voice; there was breeding in its softness, the Carigny birthright, less inalienable even than their reputed wealth, in which some day Adèle would share largely.

He followed her in. He had eyes for nothing but her sweet figure, its perfect molding, the revealed curves of her arms, the suggested curves beneath her simple frock.

A dim light burned in the sick room, where the blinds were closely drawn, after the fashion of those who fear the ready allies of light and air. Beside the bed of Raymond sat *madame*, his mother. Before a simple oratory in an alcove candles burned, upon which the woman kept an eye of watchfulness lest the lights fail before his patron saint and hers.

Flaubert motioned her away, took her place by the unconscious man, for a state of coma had come upon him, and made a quick examination, not unskillful, for he had learned many of the arts of the physician. He rose and took the girl aside.

"The curé is right," he declared. "It is very like the case of young Jean Saucier."

Adèle's hands were clasped before a heaving bosom.

"And you cured him! Then you will save my Raymond!"

"I might try."

"Oh, Flaubert, assuredly God will bless you!"

Through the doorway he could glimpse the mother kneeling in the little improvised oratory. Flaubert shrugged his shoulders, shifting his eyes from Adèle to the kneeling woman, and back to the girl, whose eyes, dew wet, sparkled before him. He told himself there was love rather than gratitude there—love for Raymond. The sweet mist was born of hope. He said, uneasily: "It is a serious affair, and I am not a doctor. I can do my best, but these cases are uncertain—"

"The doctor could do no more than his best, Flaubert. You cured Jean Saucier when he was despaired of."

"True," he nodded, "and I have faith it will work again." He added, with a queer pulsing throb at his throat: "If you are willing, Adèle."

She repeated: "Willing?"

"To pay the price."

"The drugs are costly then? But you shall have whatever is needed—if it should take everything I own."

Before her innocent glance he was almost abashed, but the devil, his master, drove him on to say: "It will take a lot, Adèle. Part of the price you must pay now, and part later."

She said fearfully: "I have not much ready money in the house."

He smiled at that, shaking his head.

"Do not be alarmed. I say that half jestingly. The price is hard for a woman to pay, for the first part is the keeping of a secret. You must promise me that whatever I tell you is never to be divulged to a living soul, under any circumstances. It is between us—eh?"

She hesitated intuitively; remembered Raymond; said slowly: "Why, I would not betray your secret, Flaubert."

"On—on your patron saint!"

"On the good St. Joseph!"

"Adèle," he said, "suppose I were to tell you that there is a blot on my past; that in the city I ruined my career by an unlawful handling of narcotics."

Her eyes alone were frightened.

"The past is the—past, Flaubert."

"Then, there is the village gossip."

"The village?"

"They whisper about me, Adèle, and credit me with having traffic with the devil himself!"

"That is childish, Flaubert!"

"It would not prevent their jumping to conclusions if—" He regarded her gravely. "I do not wish to frighten you, Adèle, but you must see the danger that I run in helping you and Raymond. Suppose my skill should not avail? Suppose that the drug which so speedily cured Jean Saucier should fail me? They know I have no reason to love Raymond—that is bold to say, but what would you? They might even accuse me—" He shrugged his shoulders.

"Flaubert, how monstrous!"

"That may be. But there it is. As for yourself—"

She said impulsively: "I will always be your friend and stand by you, whatever comes. I will know you did your best." Her eyes filled; her lips moved in prayer for the young husband of hers inside. "Come, Flaubert, we are wasting time, and he is low."

"Do not let that alarm you too greatly. I know these cases—they linger. The morning will be plenty of time for the first dose of the drug. Besides, I must assure you, in the hearing of *madame*, that I can do nothing; that it is best to await the coming of the doctor. Then, first thing in the morning, you must drive in. I shall be away from the store, and known to be so. Tell Joseph that you had left an order for a box of the usual digestive tablets that your mother takes. The drug will be put up in usual fashion, and in a parcel awaiting you with your name, along with similar orders. Be careful not to mix them—these special tablets with the other—they are precious. Then if I should fail—it is, I admit, a far cry, for I have great faith in the cure, which is my own discovery—the village gossips cannot bring rumor and accusation against me. There, do not fear—I have every confidence; but you see the risk I run. Ah, I see you do not trust me!"

"Oh, but I do, Flaubert!" she said quick-

ly. "It is the least I can do to repay you, to safeguard your name with the stupid-heads of the village."

He said slowly, smiling at her: "You forget—there is the other part of the payment."

"But yes?"

"It is payment in the coin of friendship, Adèle."

"Why, Flaubert, how can I be anything but a friend to you, after this? Raymond also, when in due time he knows."

Deschesnes shook his head.

"Raymond never liked me, Adèle—perhaps with reason—and so when his star was in the ascendant with you, my poor comet dashed earthward—*voilà!*" He paused, continuing with a sad inflection: "It is hard to be denied love, Adèle; it is still harder that, on top of this disaster, one should also lose friendship. I am lonely here, Adèle, and care not a flick of a finger for these ignorant folk; but your friendship I need. That is the price, Adèle—not money, for I would not accept a cent; but friendship—a little ounce of friendship out of your affection for Raymond. The day after to-morrow, Adèle, when the doctor comes; if Raymond is better, as assuredly he will be after the administration of the drug, I ask only that you bring me your thanks in person. How I have longed for an evening with music as we used to have! My fiddle has grown idle, because I have not often cared to touch it—since you left me for him. Is it too much to ask that you come and play all the old favorites for me—just one quiet evening together, to cement and seal this friendship of which I speak?"

"But—so soon," she protested. "Oh, I could not leave him. When he is better—"

"He will not let you come," said Flaubert, a harsh note creeping into his voice. "Or, at best, he will come with you. I want one of our old times—alone—just the two of us, and Mme. Bedard in the house to observe the proprieties, though she need not know. It is wise, of course, no one should know. You can come alone, giving excuse that you must visit one or two friends, and bidding the boy meet you with



the rig in the market square at ten, if you wish—which is a modest hour.”

She hesitated further, her features troubled, her breast agitated.

He said: “You don’t wish me to put it bluntly, Adèle, that it is the price for saving him? You can have your choice.”

He was smiling disarmingly at her as he said it, but his eyes held some odd fascination for the girl, as might the eyes of some being of omnipotence who held the keys of life and death.

*Madame* appeared anxiously in the doorway.

“*M’sieu*’ will come?” she asked simply, trustfully, indicating the bed on which Raymond lay.

They reëntered the room. Flaubert Deschesnes went quickly to the bedside.

“He is worse!” he said. “But it is beyond me, I fear, *madame*. I would not touch the case. I will try and get news through from the village to the doctor at St. Gauthier.”

At the door he turned to the girl.

“That drug in the morning is his only chance, Adèle.”

She met his eyes again. They were smiling, but there remained in them some inexorable thing.

“I will do as you wish.”

“In all things?”

“In all things,” she said helplessly.

#### IV.

It was a praiseworthy habit of Joseph Bedard to rise early. It was less praiseworthy that he should spend time that had better be devoted to the daily sweeping of the store in other things. In the room that formed the laboratory of Flaubert Deschesnes, and in which, according to the good *madame*, he held audience with the devil, were too potent lures for Joseph.

One was the library, masked behind green curtained shelves. Into this treasure house *m’sieu*’ had but recently been initiated by Flaubert, his master, and his appetite, whetted by the curious book of tales he had just finished reading, caused Joseph to take a terrible delight in drawing aside the curtain, in moments free from

observation, and considering the array of titles and the possibilities of the contents. He felt a sense of pride that this was man’s domain; that M. Deschesnes had himself commanded *madame* to keep clear of it, lest she be tempted by its untidiness into establishing fatal order.

“Joseph,” declared *m’sieu*’, “can do all that requires to be done. It is not the place for a woman.” And Bedard had swollen with pride at the thing, and heeded not the sniff and the scorn of the woman. He did not hear the added clause, because it did not escape beyond the lips of his master: “Joseph is sufficiently a fool to be safe. As for *madame*, she has the natural curiosity of a woman, which is a dangerous thing.”

Curiosity? Ah, why awaken it, then, Flaubert Deschesnes, in a foolish moment, even in a man of simple mind, with the book of Rabelaisian tales? Joseph had begun now to take an interest beyond the innocent mental pastime of holding *post-mortems* on his favorite game of draughts. The one just finished was the third volume. Hair raising tales, but to the old man as vivid and real as if enacted before his credulous eyes. He had been specially careful to keep the knowledge of *this* reading from *m’sieu*’—just why he hardly knew. He drew back the green curtain now, fingering the volume lovingly. Its wine colored cover had attracted him greatly, no less than its title, “Famous Poisonings of Medieval History.” Such tales! A woman who had chosen to be rid of her husband . . . an apothecary who had used his talents wrongfully . . .

Why must he always think of M. Deschesnes at this point? And, too, of the strange locked case, leather covered, that stood in one dark corner? That was the second potent lure for Joseph in this room. Once he had asked concerning it, in a moment of boldness, drawing the answer sharply:

“You must never touch it. It contains my most valuable drugs, and is for use only in—emergencies.”

Joseph knew, though—being not the fool he was accounted—that curious events always followed the use of it. When *m’sieu*’

worked late and long at experimentation, then Joseph knew that in the morning he would be able to detect—having watched the accumulation of dust upon it zealously—that the case had been opened. And Joseph knew, too, that in all likelihood he would earn an honest dollar or two shortly by taking from the shed in the back a pitiful bundle and burying it—possibly a dog or a cat; once or twice, other animals.

"Keep your mouth shut, Joseph," ordered *m'sieu'* at the very outset, "or I will make you to sleep as quietly as that dog!" And from the look in the speaker's eye, Joseph held small doubts in the matter. Besides, two dollars apiece was most useful, and beyond the knowledge and grasp of *madame*—not to mention an equal sum, or better, for such live animals as he might secure. "It is in the interest of humanity, Joseph," *m'sieu'* would declare. "It is better to practice on lesser creatures than humans—eh? And some day the world will benefit for the work of Flaubert Deschesnes and his assistant Joseph!"

Which eased Joseph's scruples, with the aid of a fourth of the money put to religious uses.

Few senses are more potent in the matter of the association of ideas than that of smell. As Joseph rummaged among the books this morning his mind was carried back, without volition, to events he liked best to forget, for all their financial possibilities.

"*Par dieu!*" declared Joseph, stopping suddenly in the midst of his literary ramifications. "If that is not the odor that whiffed off the last tomcat to everlasting slumber, may old Saucier win the next game! Always it is the same: first that odor; afterward, 'Joseph,' says he, grinning like the devil, 'see poor pussy has slept away its nine lives in peace. Your spade, Joseph, right after dusk sets in!'" He went over and looked at the case, noting the usual signs. "'The keys of life and death,' says my master, 'are in that, Joseph. Humanity can be blessed or cursed by it!' Well, it smells more like a curse just now. I would rather not be the sick person whom the devil doctors."

It was a faint, elusive odor, but unmis-

takable when once encountered and remembered.

"It does not live long, that odor," he communed within himself. "Therefore my master has been at his tricks again." He sniffed the wine colored volume. "My imagination," he said, "or the book smells of it also." He heard a sound in the store, as of some one descending the stairs from above, and hurried guiltily out, broom in hand, to meet Deschesnes.

"I am driving to St. Gauthier, to fetch back the doctor for La Marche," said Flaubert brusquely. "I promised his wife that aid, and the telephone service is impossible there. You will find some parcels there—prescriptions and orders—ready to be called for."

Joseph bowed him out obsequiously, and continued his sweeping industriously. Later he sorted over the little packets. It was customary for messages to be received or orders left, to be called for when customers or their messengers drove in to market.

"The cure-all," said Joseph Bedard, noting the inscription on several packages. "More miracles are wrought, it would seem, by Deschesnes digestive tablets than by the good St. Anne herself."

One took them for everything besides the digestion, thought Joseph, or else it was the seat of all ills. Familiar white tablets, of which he had sold many hundreds in boxes of six, of a dozen, of as high as a gross. Tablets at which one laughed since *m'sieu'* had confided in a moment of good humor: "A mild sedative, Joseph—a very harmless one—but potent because the patient believes."

Joseph looked over the names now, grinning the while.

"Pelissier, Duranleau, Barbeau—they all eat too heavily, anyway, and must expect to pay for it. La Marche—ah, the old lady's digestion is bad again; she is a good customer, with her aches and pains." Joseph, pursuing this thought, hoped for the good fortune of a call from the young lady herself; his thoughts of her were not shared with *madame*, who would be sure to misunderstand. As he replaced the parcels, Joseph sniffed.

Was it his imagination that the faint,



distinctive odor lingered here also? His own hands, perhaps! No! But of course *m'sieu'* had put up the parcels himself, and the taint of experiment might linger. Barbeau's parcel? No! Sansfaçon—Pelissier—Lamothe—La Marche. Ah! The little parcel for La Marche. Certainly a touch of it. Faint, but unmistakable. Probably the first put up after *m'sieu'* came from experimenting, and the paper held the odor. He sniffed again, and shivered oddly.

"What ails you, Joseph?" asked *madame* tartly, appearing in the doorway.

"Nothing!" returned Joseph hastily.

"It is always nothing with you. When St. Peter asks you what brings you to the gate, it will be 'Nothing!' Come, now, breakfast grows cold on the table. The bell will ring if any one comes."

Over the delights of his favorite meal all problems ceased to be such, and all worries departed from M. Bedard. One's imagination is sharpened by an empty stomach sometimes, and dulled by a full one.

## V.

THE village of Trois Fourchettes knew on the morrow that Raymond La Marche had achieved a miraculous recovery. From the very jaws of death he had withdrawn to the place where only unlooked for complications could cause anxiety. So the good doctor admitted, after inspection of the case, giving full credit to the nursing of the women in his absence, but declaring that such quick recoveries were not uncommon. That he himself had returned earlier than expected, at the insistence of Flaubert Deschesnes, was commonly reported among the villagers now.

As for Flaubert himself, while the village for once sang his praises, he was restless and querulous all morning, as Joseph or the good *madame* could vouch. Then, as dusk began to gather, he shut himself in the sitting room above, with a book or two and such thoughts as were his. At five he called *madame* to him and made amends for his ill-humor.

"You have been asking for the rig to visit your aunt," he said. "Tell Joseph he may take you to-night. If you leave at six you

can make a good visit and be back by mid-night."

*Madame* was radiant. She sought Joseph, who did not argue the point, much as he felt inclined. It is a wise husband who knows his own strength and his own weakness. From the upper window—the store being closed at six to-night, save for emergencies which would permit the night bell being rung—Flaubert watched them go. Across the way the starkness of the little church was softened by the approach of twilight; a golden haze gathered in the square of the market place—a liquid pool of light. The night was warm for so late in the season, but Flaubert alternated between heat and cold. He took his temperature. It was normal. He took his pulse. It was fast.

He restlessly sought the window again, watching some country folk leaving the golden light of the market place, to enter the candlelit gloom of the church.

"Poor fools!" he sneered. "But, yet, it is a sedative, harmless and potent enough because they—believe!" He shivered again. "I need a sedative myself!" In the pigeon-hole of his desk was the usual box of Deschesnes tablets. His eye fell on it. He picked it up, reading the inscription: "One tablet after eating, three times a day, or, in emergencies, one every four hours." He laughed, fingering the box. "Poor fools," he said again, "the fewer one prescribes the more faith they have in them and the more they pay for nothing, or next to nothing!" He strolled to the window again. The curé was just coming from the church. Flaubert swept him an ironical bow from the concealment of the curtains.

"M. le Curé," he said aloud, "I wonder if you have as much faith in your medicine for the soul as Flaubert Deschesnes has in his for the body. And if it is as harmless!"

He opened the box. There were four tablets left, out of the usual six that went with this convenient little box.

"Sugar-coated nothings, my children!" he laughed, and swallowed the four remaining tablets. "Take one or six it matters not—if you believe in them!"

The black-robed figure disappeared. Flaubert shook his head and stood regard-

ing the simple folk in the market square, satisfied now to return to their homes and their simple vocations. As he watched, a rig drove into the square. His pulses beat more quickly. It was the La Marche rig, the boy driving, Adèle, hooded and cloaked, beside him. Then it, too, passed out of sight by a turning up which he knew an acquaintance of hers lived. She was obeying him to the letter.

He was conscious of a tremendous stimulation.

"*Ma chérie*," he said, "you have more tonic value in your little finger than all the medicine in the world."

Passing a mirror, he could scarce believe he beheld, in the eager-eyed, self-possessed figure reflected there, the depressed and fearful self of but a short hour ago.

## VI.

THE house was very silent, and in the market square outside a similar quiet seemed to fall with darkness. Flaubert lit all the usual lights, that everything might look quite ordinary.

She would be here at eight.

He must find something to fill the minutes, so that he would not start to think again. To think? Bah, was he afraid of thoughts? In a spirit of bravado he went down to the laboratory, pulled the green curtain aside, and sought the book. When he found it on the table, where Joseph had left it in his haste, Flaubert stared, as if the thing had possessed itself of legs and animation to come out and witness against him. Joseph's carelessness, he decided. He took the wine-colored volume upstairs with him, and began to read in horrible fascination.

He put the book down, lit a cigarette, and leaned back. There was no loophole in it. Everything most ordinary, and above suspicion—except—why had he not bided his time? Why insist that she come to-night? What trap of the devil was this? That, if trouble did come, suspicion, danger, she should be caught in the mesh with him? Or merely that he could not wait—to see her—to have her with him—alone? The cigarette trembled in his fingers.

He picked up the book and read the page again, which he noticed, with a quick prick of suspicion, was notably fingered beyond the rest:

. . . So the apothecary being very skilled, did devise and perfect this most subtle poison, which had this virtue, that for two days its effect was not apparent, but on the third day there would come upon the victim a lassitude that speedily brought death, of apparent natural causes, and beyond the detection of the most expert of men. And the apothecary was much in repute with those who sought vengeance against others. Moreover, he mixed the poison with a stimulating potion of common use, so that he who was ailing might drink of it, and take benefit for a space of two days, and on the third day lassitude would come, and invariably death, for which none could account, save that the sickness was mortal from the first. But it is recounted that the apothecary, through the keenness and wit . . .

Flaubert threw down the book. There were no loopholes in his case. Medieval methods were out of date. No one would ever know or suspect.

Had the house grown suddenly cold, or whence came this chill? Fear? Was he to be tormented always by one who knew? Flaubert Deschesnes knew. Must he ever look into the mirror of a morning and behold alike the eyes and features of a murderer, and the accusing gaze of one who knew? What vile thing had he done? What devil lived within him that had perverted his cleverness, his God-given powers, as men were pleased to use the phrase, to such ends?

Well, it was too late now. ". . . and invariably death—and invariably death!" There was no escape. The thing was done; remained for him but to reap the reward of daring. Hundreds died each month because men were careless, neglectful, grasping, selfish—why not one because a man was daring?

The doorbell rang. The reward of daring! He hurried down to let Adèle de Carigny in. When he saw her, standing there in the last mellowness of the after-glow, the street deserted without, the house deserted within, he knew in his heart that even for this moment he would barter all he had or was.



"Come along up, Adèle," he said. "*Madame* has a headache and is asleep in her own room; our music will not trouble her now she is off."

He helped her remove her wraps.

"You are very pale," he rallied her. "You have been through so much, poor child!" He coughed a little and added: "How is *he* to-night?"

"Much better, Flaubert. The doctor says such quick turns are not uncommon—at which I smiled and held my peace." She said impulsively: "Oh, Flaubert, the good God will bless you for what you have done. You have given me back my Raymond—my Raymond!"

Tormenting flames burned at his temples. The sudden flush of those pale cheeks, the misty sparkle of those sweet eyes—these were for Raymond, not for him. He was glad now—glad—glad that he had done this thing. There was no place for real pity in his mood. He led her to the piano; sat back and drank in her beauty as she played. The music grew on him, stealing his emotions.

"Your violin?" she asked, after a time.

"Perhaps—later," he said.

She turned to the keys again, and lost herself in the playing. As for Flaubert, the music tore him with its sweetness, racked him with jealousy. She was playing to her love, as surely as if words had been given to it, playing to *him*—to Raymond—Flaubert was seized with a desire to rise up and take by force that which Raymond still owned by every right. She broke off and turned to him, when it seemed self-possession could no longer be his.

"Flaubert," she said, smiling faintly now that the first strangeness of this payment of the price of Raymond's life had passed. "I have a terrible confession to make to you. You have asked my friendship, even if in a strange way, and I am anxious and ready to pay, and that nothing should come between. It's such a little, silly thing, but it troubles me, when you have done so much. Those tablets you sent, Flaubert—there were four, you know. I was to give him one, and if that did not avail, another, and so as there were four, and I—I remembered what you had said about sus-

picion, Flaubert—oh, forgive me, I was suddenly afraid, and hesitated."

She smiled at him, appealingly.

He found voice. "But, of course, you gave him—"

"Two in all. He seemed so much better then, I remembered your instructions and let well enough alone. But, Flaubert—what will you think of me? When first I gave him one I was unstrung and afraid, and I said: 'If it should harm him—' And I quickly took one myself, that if I wronged him I should wrong myself, too—that if he went, I should go, too. Besides, I think it was half in penitence, too—to show I really trusted you. What's the matter, Flaubert? Are you so very angry? Are they so costly that the waste of one—"

"No, no! It is nothing. I am amused only, you odd child! Play me something more!"

Her back once turned, he sank into a chair, staring at her tensely. Just one—in love and penitence and trust! Good God! Three days from now those sweet limbs would be impotent to move, those hands enfeebled, those eyes grown dull as mirrors no longer reflecting the things of life, that heart beating more slowly and—"and invariably death!"

As a man who stacked all on a single throw might see the prize slipping from his grasp, so did Flaubert regard the girl. If there was pity in his glance and in his heart, it was rather for himself and the estate to which this evil deed had brought him. Pity that is born of the devil comes only for ill purposes, and is not evoked charitably. To lose all! The girl—his reputation—his liberty or life, perhaps—for how should the thing be covered safely now? Two deaths, so similar—however natural in manner—must arouse suspicion. This very affair to-night was folly. There was nothing left but ruin, fleeing or remaining.

Nothing? Yes, these moments that were flying so fast! If the future held ruin, the present held possibilities. He would drink his cup of satisfaction; afterward let come what might. So does the tempter dangle present lures before his dupes.

"Adèle!" He seated himself beside her. She looked up and edged away involun-

tarily, but, as if afraid to give sign of fear, played on.

"Adèle!" he said again.

Her eyes met his, and a last chord crashed into silence. Before that look in his eyes, quite open now, she recoiled.

"Adèle!" he cried a third time, and took her in his embrace.

"Flaubert! *Madame!*" she cried.

"*Madame* is seven miles away by now," he mocked, for the devil had full possession. "Adèle, there is the second price to pay." Once in his arms she ceased to struggle. "She loves me," he exulted in his heart, "she does not resist!" But Adèle had fainted. He laid her on a couch, struck with a new fear. What if the drug worked on her more quickly than he thought? What if she died right here? He must revive her—water—stimulants—

Somewhere a door closed. Downstairs! Steps on the stairs! He stood helpless. The terrified face of Joseph Bedard appeared in the doorway. Joseph's jaw dropped, but courage of desperation came to stiffen him.

"*M'sieu'*," he stammered. "I came back. I felt something was wrong. My conscience, *m'sieu'*! I risked *madame's* anger to leave her. 'Suppose,' I said, 'he should take them, and anything should be wrong.'"

"Speak, you fool!" cried Flaubert, ash-en, for Joseph had become incoherent.

"The book!" accused Joseph, pointing at the wine-colored volume. He seized it. "Look," he said, "see for yourself how temptation comes. It always opens at that place." He pointed a trembling finger at the point where one could read:

. . . But it is recounted that the apothecary, through the keenness and wit of his assistant, was discovered in the thing that he did, and the assistant made secret substitution of certain drugs of his master's own using for his stomach's sake, and the apothecary took thereof, and on the third day died of his own subtle poison.

The book fell from Joseph's hand.

They had forgotten the girl—facing this thing.

Flaubert said slowly: "You—you substituted them?"

"*M'sieu'*, but yes. The four for La

Marche, for the four which I knew to be in the box on your desk." Joseph cringed. "It was the story, *m'sieu'*. I do not know what possessed me to do it, for it is folly to think that you— Yet it worried me, and I came back. *M'sieu'*, why do you look so?"

Joseph's eyes, following those of his master, were recalled to the girl on the couch. "*M'sieu'*," he cried, horror stricken. "You did not give her—"

Flaubert Deschesnes straightened himself, and smiled oddly.

"No, Joseph," he said, "fetch water, and lave her hands and face. *Madame* La Marche was taken suddenly ill and dropped in here."

Joseph was relieved. "There—I told *madame*, my wife, that something called me back—so you see I shall laugh at her later. But, *m'sieu'*, I am glad the tablets are not as I fancied in my folly."

"Joseph," said Flaubert Deschesnes, again with that odd smile, "don't get mixed up with the devil's tools." He picked up the wine-colored book and laid it on the table. "As for the pills, have I not told you before, take one or six, it matters not!"

Adèle de Carigny responded slowly to the ministrations, sat up, staring rather vacantly at the two men.

"Joseph will see that you get safely home, Adèle," said Flaubert aloud. "It is well you were near by when taken ill." He confided in her ear: "You need fear nothing. As for myself—I will not bother you again. In a couple of days from now I am leaving on a long journey. It is better so. I shall not return."

After she had gone downstairs, he went to the window, watching her drive off with Joseph, who would see her home or in the care of the hired boy, and then call for *Madame*, his wife.

The square was poorly lighted, but across the way the little church was softly outlined.

"Sugar-coated nothings!" said Flaubert bitterly. "Take one—or six—or four—it matters not!" He took the empty box from his vest pocket, and tossed it into a wastebasket. "Forty-eight hours, Flaubert Deschesnes," he said, "and invariably death!"



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